

THE MEANING of
The MASS

REV. M. J. GRIFFITH D. D.



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THE MEANING OF THE MASS

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Adapted to the Doctrinal, Moral and Historical
Explanations of

THE HOLY MASS

BY
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REV. M. J. GRIFFITH, D. D.



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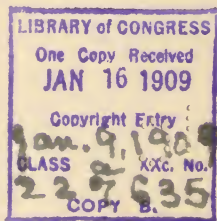
“Nihil Obstat”

Francis E. Klauder, C. SS. R.

“Imprimatur”

✠ *Thomas M. A. Burke,*

Bishop of Albany



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The Meaning of the Mass

USE OF VESTMENTS, CANDLES, ETC.

“The Queen stood on thy right hand, in gilded clothing; surrounded with variety.”—Psalms 44:9.

THESE words of the royal prophet refer to the Church as the spouse of Jesus Christ, and their accomplishment is seen in the vestments worn by her ministers during the celebration of the sacred mysteries. Before entering upon the promised explanation of the principal prayers and ceremonies of the Mass, in order that in so important a matter nothing may be omitted, my remarks will be concerning the vestments used by the priest at the altar, and the candles which are lighted at the commencement of Mass, for there is a meaning in every religious ceremony, and it would be wrong for us to witness these ceremonies all our lifetime and not be able to understand their meaning, object, and end.

The ceremonies of the Church are so many signs which express thought more vividly than words, and were established for our edification, for our instruction, and to awaken our attention. We learn from the Scriptures that Almighty God attached special graces to these ceremonies, for we read in the Book of Exodus, 17:11, that Moses prayed with his hands raised

towards Heaven, and when he lowered his hands the Israelites weakened, but as long as Moses remained with his hands extended toward Heaven the Israelites gained the victory over Amalek. St. Paul, who on many occasions instructed the Christians that they were free from the ceremonies of the law, held those of the Church in such high esteem that he would not listen to any reason for either changing or omitting them. "If," said he, "anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor hath the Church of God." (1 Cor. 11:16.) It is highly important, then, for us to know the true meaning or reason, not only of the ceremonies of the Mass, but also all those things which precede this great and holy act.

But here you may say to me, and very justly, if the Church intends the faithful to understand the meaning of all her prayers and ceremonies, why does she celebrate her offices in an unknown language?—why does she not use a language that all can understand? This is an objection often made against the Church, and at first sight it seems to have some merit, but it is an objection that has been answered as often as made, and after I explain to you the meaning of the vestments and the candles used during the sacrifice of the Mass, I will endeavor to give you a reason why the Church recites all her prayers in Latin, and not in the vernacular or common language of the place or country.

In society there are always special dresses for spe-

cial occasions—dresses adopted for one place which would be unsuitable for another. In Europe there is a special dress for the courts of justice, a special dress for the halls of science, dresses for festive occasions, and dresses for times of mourning and sorrow. And why should not the Church have a special dress for her clergy in the celebration of the sacred mysteries? In the Old Law, God marked out the vestments to be used in the functions of the ministry, and, although we are not subject to all the ceremonies of the Old Law, nevertheless we should not enter in the holy of holies, and celebrate the Lord's sacraments, clad as for the ordinary duties of life. Religion has one dress for the ministry and another for ordinary use. True, the sacred mysteries, infinitely grand in themselves, do not require any external display of grandeur, but, then, mankind very often require external and sensible signs to remind them internally of the invisible grandeur of the mysteries. The Church, in the early days of the Apostles, was poor, and consequently was not able to make any display of magnificence; but since she became rich, by reason of the presents of the great and powerful ones of the earth who were converted to the faith, she celebrates the sacred offices with all the magnificence possible, because all that is grand in the world belongs to God and should be consecrated to His service and glory. "Silver is mine," says the Lord when speaking of the glory of the temple of the desired of nations. This it was which gave rise to the erection

of so many temples by those princes who either embraced or authorized Christianity. We learn from history that Constantine gave Narcissus, Bishop of Jerusalem, a robe woven with gold, to be used when conferring the Sacrament of Baptism, and he also sent many ornaments to the churches, which he called God's houses. The custom of celebrating the sacred ceremonies with special vestments and ornaments was always universally observed up to the time they were abolished in many places by the Protestant Reformers. The custom, however, has not been entirely abolished among Protestants, for up to the present day it is observed in Europe, America and elsewhere among those who adhere to the Anglican or Episcopalian Church. The Catholic Church, which admits of no change in that which she practiced from the beginning, prescribes for her priests in the celebration of Mass the use of the *Amice*, *Alb*, *Cincture*, *Maniple*, *Stole* and *Chasuble*. The *Amice* takes its name from a Latin word which signifies to cover. It was introduced for the purpose of covering the neck, which, in olden times, among laymen and ecclesiastics, was bare, and it seemed more becoming in the Church to have the neck covered. The *Amice* is also regarded as a helmet which is worn on the head, so that the priest, when going to the altar, could consider himself as armed against the attacks of the evil one, according to the words of St. Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians: "Take unto you the armor of God, that you may be

able to resist on the evil day; take the helmet which is the hope of salvation," and hence the prayer said by the priest when putting it on: "Place, O Lord, upon my head the helmet of salvation."

The Alb, so called from its being of white material, was originally a garment worn by the most distinguished personages of the Roman republic, and became quite common among the clergy in the exercise of their ecclesiastical functions. The ancient Fathers always speak of the clergy as robed in white when in the Church, and we find this color used by those who serve at the altar where the Lamb without stain is sacrificed. The blessed spirits are represented clad in white robes, indicative of their purity. It is for this reason that the Church requires the priest, when vesting with the *Alb*, to pray that he may be whitened in the blood of the Lamb, that he may merit to share in the joys of Heaven.

Those who wear long and flowing robes always find it convenient to use a cincture to facilitate them in the motion of walking. "Gird thyself," said the Angel to St. Peter, when he awoke him in prison. The cincture is also an admonition to the priest to be careful to preserve the virtue of purity, and the Church requires that when putting it on he should ask Almighty God to gird his loins with a cincture of purity, to enable him to preserve his chastity.

The Maniple comes from a Latin word which means a towel or handkerchief, because in olden times the

maniple was a linen cloth which was used to wipe the perspiration from off the face, and was generally carried on the left arm. In more recent times it became an ornament, and at present it is used as a figurative handkerchief, intended to wipe off not the body alone, but the mind and the heart, to banish the fear of labor, and to inspire a love of good works.

The Stole is a mark of power attached to the function, and for this reason it is worn by bishops, priests and deacons only, sub-deacons and all inferior officers being forbidden to use it. When putting on this vestment of honor the Church wishes the priest to ask Almighty God to enable him to regain that innocence and immortality with which man was adorned when first he came from the hands of the Creator.

The Chasuble was formerly a large round cloak, open only at the top to allow the head to pass through. During the first seven centuries it was the ordinary garment of those who wore long robes. After that time the laity gave up the custom or garment, but those who were consecrated to God retained it. The Greeks still preserve it, unaltered. The Latins modified it a little, so as to have the hands free, otherwise it would be heavy to tuck up and raise it whenever the priest offered incense or at the elevation of the host and chalice. In former times the chasuble covered the whole body, and was intended to represent the yoke of Jesus Christ, and nowadays it is admirably represented by the cross, which is always on the back.



Besides the vestments worn by the priest at Mass there is the tunic, worn by the sub-deacon, and the dalmatic, worn by the deacon at solemn Masses; these vestments are intended to mark the joy with which the ministers of the Lord should serve at the altar. *The Capes* used generally at Vespers were, in ancient days, cloaks worn during rainy weather at processions, and the cape at the back of it was a kind of hood intended to cover the head. Since that time these cloaks, which are generally made of costly material, are used in the Church as an ornament for solemn services.

In her sacred offices the Church uses vestments, sometimes of one color, sometimes of another, intended to represent the mystery she honors, or the feast she celebrates. *White* is used for the glorious mysteries of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and for the festivals of virgins; *red* for martyrs; *violet* in times of penance; *black* for the service of the dead, and *green* for Sundays and other ordinary days. In this, as in other matters which are not of ecclesiastical discipline, there are different customs in different churches.

All this apparel is intended to impress upon our minds the great care we should observe, and never to appear before the Lord unless we are inwardly adorned with every kind of virtue, for the exterior ornament should be a sign or a sensible mark of the virtue with which our soul is adorned. This is the impression which the priest, when clothed with the sa-

cred vestments, should make upon the minds of the people when he comes from the sacristy to the altar, and from this the faithful should learn also that whenever they come to Mass they should do so with propriety and decency, showing the care with which they have prepared themselves inwardly, and always bear in mind what the Lord said to Moses in reference to the people who approached the holy mountain. "And He said to him," as we read in Exodus 19: 10, "'go to the people and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their garments; and let them be ready against the third day, for on the third day the Lord will come down in sight of all people on Mount Sinai.' "

In the first ages of the Church the Christians who assembled on Sunday early in the morning, and who, on account of the persecutions, were often obliged to take refuge in dark and obscure places, found it necessary to light candles or lamps in order to see what they were about. Sometimes even, according to Jewish customs, they doubled the number of candles as a greater mark of joy. And St. Luke tells us (Acts 20: 8) that there were a great number of lamps in the place where St. Paul preached a long sermon on the first day of the week, which, according to St. John, is called the Lord's day, Sunday. Hence is derived the custom of lighting candles—not only at the evening service, in order to be able to read, but also during the daytime, and to mark the solemnity of the

festival by the number of candles lighted. About the year 230 the Lord performed a miracle in order that the Church of Jerusalem might not be deprived the joy of an illumination, for, as Eusebius says, "the oil having failed, the holy bishop Narcissus took some water from a neighboring well and put it in all the lamps, whereupon they shone more brilliantly than if they had been filled with the best of oil." The same author tells us that on Easter Sunday night, besides the illumination of the churches, the Emperor Constantine had large candles and every species of lamps lighted in all the streets of the city, so that the night was more brilliant than the day.

The custom of lighting candles at Mass during the daytime was first introduced by the Eastern Church, and we have every reason to suppose they took it from the Jews, for at that time, as well as at the present day, the Jews kept a lamp constantly before the book of the law of Moses; and certainly it was eminently proper that the Gospel, when announced solemnly, should be preceded or accompanied by a light, which would mark the respect due to the holy book which shed light all over the dark places of the Old Law. That which was observed in the Churches of the East, and which was practiced for more than 1400 years, as we learn from St. Jerome, was followed by the other churches, and, not content with lighting candles during the reading of the Gospel, they were kept lit during the whole of the sacrifice where Jesus Christ,

our true light, is really present, and afterwards they were lit during all the offices, and this, for many reasons, to render them more solemn; to lead the people assembled to think of Jesus Christ, who is the true light. And on this account an ancient writer says, speaking on this matter: "We never celebrate Mass without a light—not for the purpose of dispelling darkness, for Mass is always said on full day, but in order to have a symbol of the Divine Light, present on our altar in the sacrament which is there effected, and without which we would be as much in darkness as in the blackest night. The lighted candles admonish us that, being formerly in darkness, we have been enlightened in Jesus Christ, and that we must account ourselves children of light by our acts of charity, of justice, and truth.

And now a few words as to the reason why the Church uses the Latin language in all her offices, and not the vernacular in each country.

At the commencement of Christianity the Church recited her offices in the vernacular of each country, and she would wish it were the case at the present day, as it would be productive of great good; but it is impossible to change the ancient language which for so many years has ceased to be a vernacular tongue on account of the great inconvenience that would naturally result and which would do more harm than good. In the first place, although the Latin language is not the vernacular of all the people of the Eastern

Church, nevertheless it is a language most universally known throughout Europe, and consequently the one that can be most conveniently used.

There is no language equal to it in dignity. It was spoken by kings, who gave it a character of dignity unique in history which the most perfect languages have never been able to attain. It was the language of the Roman conquerors, and even across the broad Atlantic to our own country. It is the language of civilization, the language of science.

In vain do Protestants repeat the objection of its being a language unknown to the people, and ask why does the Church of Rome persist in using an unknown language. But what more sublime idea than a universal language for a universal Church. The Catholic may wander from pole to pole, and whenever or wherever he enters a church of his rite he is at home, and nothing is strange to him. When entering the Church he sees the same altar and hears the same prayers he was accustomed to from infancy, and can join with his brethren in singing the praises of God; he understands them and they understand him.

The brotherhood which results from a common language is a mysterious bond of immense strength. In the ninth century, Pope John VIII. gave the Slavonians permission to celebrate the divine service in their own language, and was afterwards forced to acknowledge the inconvenience of the toleration. Gregory VII. withdrew this permission, but it was

too late with regard to the Russians. If the Latin language had been introduced among them they never would have fallen under the degraded Greeks of the lower empire.

If the vernacular were used in each country the prayers would be subject to constant changes, because the living languages change incessantly, and after one hundred years the language of a people is never the same. In these constant changes many essential variations might, unperceived, enter the dogma of faith, the deposit of which is found in the public prayers of the Church.

And then, again, it would be necessary to celebrate the divine services in three or four different languages in one and the same city, town, or village, and in each of these languages there should be changes according as the language changed. And hence it follows that those who go from one country to another would know nothing of the public prayers of the Church, and the priests themselves would not be able to say Mass on account of not knowing the vernacular.

Experience shows that to change the language of the public is a very difficult task. See the result of it among Protestants. The translation of the Psalms by Marot and Beza is not intelligible at the present day; their ancient translation of the Scripture is a language so old that it can scarcely be understood. After a great deal of discussion on the matter it was found

necessary to make a new translation, and consequently a new version.

There are a great many essential changes in the new Bibles of Switzerland and Geneva. Even new translations wander farther away from the true sense of Scripture, and the people who have these books among them esteem themselves happy, not thinking that, instead of the word of God, they have but too often the private interpretation of their doctors, who, despising the Church, the pillar and ground of truth, which Jesus Christ has commanded us to hear, under the pain of being considered pagans and publicans, and who, allowing themselves to be seduced by their own ideas, do not preserve even the first foundations of Christianity.

This cannot happen in the Catholic Church; this spouse of Jesus Christ preserves intact the deposit of faith and the Word of God, and never allows the least change to be made by any of her children. She prefers, rather, to deprive them of some consolation than change the ancient customs and the language of the early centuries. The use of Latin is not intended to conceal the mysteries of salvation from the people, because she commands her pastors to explain the prayers and ceremonies to the people, and her invariable principle is never to change anything which concerns the faith.

Protestants in general bring the fourteenth chapter of the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, as

an objection against the use of Latin in the Church. In this epistle St. Paul says nothing about the public service of the Church, which at Corinth was in the Greek language and which all the people understood, but, on the contrary, St. Paul approves of the unknown language in the Church, provided what is said is translated for those who do not understand. He censures the abuse which was introduced by reason of the gift of tongues, and never wished any instruction to be given in an unknown language unless there was someone present to interpret what was said.

We may furthermore say the language of the Church in her public offices is not absolutely an unknown language. There are a great many people acquainted with it, and there are translations of the services in every language for those who do not understand the Latin. Instead of envying those who have their services in the vernacular we should consider ourselves happy in belonging to that Church in which we can find the true means of serving God here on earth and of blessing Him forever in Heaven.

NATURE OF THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

“And he took the blood, and sprinkled it upon the people, and said: This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.”—Exodus 24:8.

THESE words were spoken by Moses, nor is there here any question of a transitory alliance or covenant of a law of death. This covenant was cemented with blood as the first which God made with His people, but it is no longer the blood of a mortal victim, of a senseless and irrational host—it is the blood of a God, which, shed in honor of a God, fully and completely repairs the outrage offered to God; it is the blood of the most holy, of the most excellent of the children of men, which, shed for the salvation of man, gives him the assurance of pardon and grace, peace and happiness. The words were spoken by Him whom God had given us as a victim; it is from Him we learn the real presence of the precious blood shed for the remission of sin. He it was who spoke the divine words of the institution of the august sacrifice of our altar.

Christ Jesus, clothed with a mortal body to glorify His Father and to redeem mankind by His blood, wishing to extend His kingdom, desired when dying

to leave His Church a sacrifice worthy of Him, which might be as a center of religion, where all the glory of the Father and the faith of the people might unite; where man might find the full remission of his sin and an assurance of life eternal.

Who could believe that a Christian with whom He has contracted so intimate an alliance, upon whom He has conferred so many favors, and from whom He requires such eminent sanctity, would be wanting in sacrifice to honor God, to render a thanksgiving worthy of Him, whilst the most barbarous and savage tribes, through a natural desire or inclination, have offered to their false divinities cruel and ridiculous sacrifices, which, although proofs of their ignorance and brutality, serve, nevertheless, as testimonies of their religion. Christ Jesus would not certainly refuse us the means of honoring His Father and of acknowledging His redemption. He himself becomes the victim, in whom all dignity is found and where perfect adoration is practiced up to the end of ages. For He instituted the Eucharistic sacrifice to represent the sacrifice of the Cross.

The time having at length arrived when the Savior of the world should consummate the great work for which He came on earth, the redemption of mankind, He took upon His shoulders the instrument of His torture and went to the place of ignominy, there to procure for His Father the most perfect homage that could be offered Him. There, crowned with thorns,

His countenance all besmeared with blood, His body lacerated in all its members, His hands pierced and outstretched, surrounded by the angels of peace, who wept bitter tears, He raises His eyes to Heaven; no word escapes His lips, but His wounds plead in favor of those who caused them. There, in the most profound devotedness, He adores His Father, satisfies His justice, thanks Him for the torments which He suffers, and, dying, requests that He can die but once. There the Word incarnate honors the Divinity in a manner such as all Christians, united, animated by the most heroic charity, could never approach.

And this homage He renews in the Eucharistic mystery (incessantly prostrated before God, there humbled with the most profound respect), He again offers His blood and sacrifices Himself without reserve, so that, in order to glorify His Father in an infinite manner, all the merit of His death, all that was achieved by His sufferings upon the cross, are on our altar. True, He cannot again suffer and die, but everything here recalls His death and represents it perfectly. We have a figure of His death in the mysterious separation of the body and blood, since, by virtue of the words of consecration, the chalice contains the blood and the body is contained in the bread, and if Jesus Christ is whole and entire in the one and the other as He in reality is, it is by the natural concomitance which every living body supposes. We have a figure of it in the distribution of the species, when it becomes

our food, impassible and immortal as He is, He dies a mystic death. We have a figure of it in the end, proposed when he said "Do this in commemoration of me," for it is impossible to think of Him without thinking of His passion. Hence it is when offering it to the Eternal Father we say: "Be mindful of His poverty." Remember the want to which He was subjected and the penitent and crucified life He led. "Be mindful of His tears," those tears of blood which streamed from every pore of His body. Remember the bitter chalice which He drank to the dregs. Remember His opprobrium, that He was annihilated even to become as a worm of the earth. He deserved only praise and adoration, but hesitated not to end His days in infamous torture. Remember, O Holy Father, remember thy Son, who loved Thee to an indefinite degree, and who testified His love by every drop of His blood.

I might even go farther and say that in the sacrifice of the Mass there is something more than was on Calvary. In the Mass the Savior is more profoundly humbled than on Calvary; He is more divinely sacrificed. And how so? Because He gives man power to call Him upon the altar, gives him power to consume Him, to distribute Him to others, to carry Him about from place to place, and to dispose of Him at will. Because He degrades Himself by descending into our bodies, which, on account of their defilement, are, alas, too often more horrible than the place on which

He expired. Because, even supposing that we receive Him with true piety, He finds in us after all an abode unworthy of Him.

And what shall we say of the many other accidents which warrant a sort of preference for this sacrifice divine in every manner? Divine in its continuity, the sacrifice of the Cross was offered but once; the sacrifice of the Mass is offered without interruption. Divine in its immensity, the sacrifice of the Cross was offered at Jerusalem alone; the sacrifice of the Mass is offered by the hands of thousands of priests in every part of the globe. Divine in its perpetuity, the sacrifice of the Cross lasted only three hours; the sacrifice of the Mass has lasted for more than 1800 years and will last up to the end of time. Divine in the manner of execution, on the Cross Christ Jesus was in the natural state of a man suffering; on the altar He occupies a position incomprehensible and ineffable; He sacrifices Himself without suffering; He is separated without being divided; He is eaten without being destroyed. On our altar He is the same as He reigns in Heaven, but without His splendor; He is there as He was on the Cross, but without its sorrow and its agony. Behold the miracle of this holocaust! His heart is the altar, His love the fire, His humanity the victim, God is the term, and Heaven to which we ascend is the reward. On the Cross, Christ Jesus satisfied His love by giving His life for us; but in dying He ceased to be with us corporally;

on our altar He continues to satisfy that love, and He remains corporally with us by a sacramental and real presence. On the altar He applies to us the wonderful effects of His passion, without losing any of the pleasure He experienced from being with us, for as we read in the book of Proverbs 8: 31: "His delight was to be with the children of men."

When our Savior died upon the Cross He satisfied for our sins, but this satisfaction did not take effect with regard to us, for we were not then in existence, but it is daily applied to us by the renewal of His death which takes place on our altar. The sacrifice of the Mass is not a supplement, but rather a repetition of the sacrifice of the Cross. The sacrifice of the Cross was most perfect, consequently needs no supplement. On the Cross, Christ Jesus worked out and merited our redemption; there He paid the full price of our ransom, and the same Jesus Christ who paid that ransom is present on our altar to consummate His work by applying it to us. The sacrifice of the Mass is a continual application of the sacrifice of the Cross, or, rather, it is a continual celebration of the sacrifice of the Cross. And for this reason it is called, in a certain sense, a sacrifice of redemption, for we do pray to the Lord that He would enable us to worthily celebrate these mysteries; every time we make commemoration of the Host we renew the work of redemption; that is to say, in applying it we continue it, we consummate it.

In the sacrifice of the Mass, Christ Jesus is not only the victim offered—He is also the high priest who makes the offering of Himself through the priests, who are His organs, His ministers. This we are taught by the council of Trent; it is also the teaching of St. Augustine, who, speaking of the sacrifice of the Mass, says that Jesus Christ is the priest who offers, and is at the same time the victim offered. This truth is based on the eternity of His priesthood: “*Tu es sacerdos in aeternum*”—“Thou art a priest forever.” The priesthood of Jesus Christ is not like that of the Old Law. In the Old Law the priests succeeded each other because death prevented them from being always clothed with this dignity, but Jesus Christ, who abides forever, to intercede for us, possesses an eternal priesthood, of which He cannot be deprived to communicate it to another. He may have ministers of His priesthood, but He cannot have successors. Jesus Christ, having instituted the Eucharist in order to continue on our altar the sacrifice which He consummated on the Cross, and since there can be no true sacrifice without a priest to make the oblation, He must himself be the priest of the sacrifice of our altar, as He is also the victim.

Since His ascension into Heaven our Savior no longer appeared visibly on earth to perform the priestly functions, but He established ministers to represent Him, and they are, as it were, the depositaries of His sacerdotal power. Moreover, the Church,

which is a visible society, could not subsist on earth without a visible sacrifice, and this sacrifice could not be offered except by ministers who would visibly perform the functions of the priesthood. Now, the Mass being the visible sacrifice which Christ left to His Church, it was necessary for Him, before He returned to Heaven, to appoint ministers who would visibly make the offering which He himself makes in an invisible manner. And this He did when He instituted the Eucharist; He gave His Church the power of offering His body and blood when He said: "Do this in commemoration of me." What was to be done in commemoration of Him? The same that He himself had done then and there. He took bread and wine and, having blessed them, changed them into His body and blood and gave His Apostles power to do the same; He established them the ministers of His priesthood. He did not intend that this power should extend to all the faithful, for, if that were the case, women would be capable of exercising the functions of the ministry. But St. Paul would not allow them even to speak in the Church, much less to offer the sacrifice. This power was restricted by Christ to the Apostles, and in them to the bishops and priests, who are their successors.

If we consider in the sacrifice of the Mass only that which we see with our eyes it certainly appears different from that of the Cross. Christ Jesus is not visible in human form, as He was on Calvary; there

is no shedding of blood; He does not die as He did on Calvary; but if we consider the design He had in view when He instituted the Eucharist, to leave us a memorial of His passion, and the commandment He gave the Apostles, to do what He had done, in commemoration of Him, the sacrifice of the Mass is not different from that of the Cross, but simply a continuation of it, since we every day offer to God on our altar not only the true body and blood of Jesus Christ, but also the death which He suffered for us on the Cross.

The surroundings of Calvary had nothing in common with the action of the high priest who suffered the bloody sacrifice of the Cross. It was the offering which Jesus Christ made to His Father of the blood which He shed and the death which He suffered at the same time, in order to render Him the supreme homage which was His due—to repair by a profound obedience the injury which man had done by His rebellion and sin.

It is the same death which is to-day offered on our altar, and which will be daily offered throughout the world up to the end of time, either by Jesus Christ himself, who, as high priest, continues to make the, invisible oblation of His body and His blood, or by the priests who are His visible ministers, or by the faithful, who, being members of the body of the Church of which Christ is the head, unite with Him to present to God the sole and only price of redemption. So that, as the two sacrifices differ only in the manner of immo-

lating or slaying the victim, the death which Jesus Christ suffered on the Cross and that which He offers to God in the sacrifice of the Mass being the same, it follows that the sacrifice of the Cross and the sacrifice of the Mass are the same, differing only in the manner of offering.

In what does this difference consist? Christ died upon the Cross; He actually shed His blood, and consequently can die no more. On the altar He offers himself in a mystic manner, which represents His death—in other words, His oblation and immolation took place openly on the cross, without any veil or figure; in a word, He died in his own person, whilst in the sacrifice of the Mass the external oblation is made under the veil, and visible appearance of bread and wine, consequently, is a mystic and sacramental oblation. On Calvary He shed His blood; on the altar He offers himself in an unbloody manner. On Calvary He offered His present death—that is to say the death He suffered there and then; on the altar He offers His death, which is past and consummated. He offered His death on Calvary as a sacrifice of redemption, and in order to merit for mankind the graces of which they stood in need. On the altar He offers himself as a sacrifice of propitiation and to apply to mankind the graces He merited for them on the Cross. The merit of these graces was perfected on Calvary; the application of them is made in the sacrifice of the Mass.

By this different mode of offering we share in the

bloody sacrifice of the Cross. For as in order to share in the fruit of the ancient sacrifices it was necessary to eat of the victim sacrificed, so, in order to be sanctified by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and to participate in the victim which He offered on the Cross—that is to say, His body—we must really eat of it, according to the words of Christ himself: “Unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink of His blood you shall not have life in you.”—John 6: 54.

The sacrifice of the Mass then being the same as that of the Cross, the mystic immolation which there takes place is intended to recall His death and to represent the passion which He suffered on Calvary, what should be our thoughts and what should we do when we assist at Mass? To assist at Mass is to be present at the sacrifice of the death of a God, the same that was offered on Calvary, the same that Jesus Christ consummated on the Cross, the same wherein this God made man consent to be annihilated. This is not a supposition; it is an article of faith; the victim is the same God whom we adore and serve. Consequently, if by any irreverence or scandal on our part we add to the humiliations of the cross which are renewed in the sacrifice of the Mass; if, when contemplating our Divine Savior on the altar, our hearts are not broken as were the stones at the moment when He expired; if this dying victim excites not in our hearts a contrition as firm as was that of the Centurian and of the Jew who was converted at

His death; if by our irreverence we insult His agony as did the soldiers and executioners who crucified Him, are we not deserving of more rigid punishment at the hand of God? For either we believe what faith teaches concerning the sacrifice of our religion or we do not. Whichever side we take there is no excuse for us. If we believe that it is a true sacrifice offered to a true God, and in which a true God is sacrificed, and sacrifices Himself, are we not more guilty than the Jews who crucified Him because they knew Him not? If we are wanting in faith, if we do not believe that Christ is present in the sacrifice, why assist at it? Why obey a law which, according to our false ideas, is neither a commandment nor a duty for us? In such a case what are we to do? Will we withdraw from the communion of the faithful, absent ourselves from the Church and take no part in the ceremonies? No, there should be a different effect of this instruction. We will always go to the Holy Mountain to sacrifice to the Lord. We will go to be cleansed and purify ourselves in the blood of the Divine Host, which should be for us the price of eternal happiness.

EXCELLENCE AND END FOR WHICH THE MASS IS OFFERED

“And they shall offer sacrifice to the Lord in justice, and the sacrifice of Juda and Jerusalem shall please the Lord, as in the days of old, and in the ancient years.”—Malachi 3:3, 4.

A SACRIFICE offered in all places and at all times, offered from the beginning of Christianity, and which will be offered up to the consummation of ages; a sacrifice which is offered to meet our every want; destined to wash away every sin; a sacrifice in which not only the members of the Church militant participate, but likewise the elect in Heaven by the union of their homage, and the sorrowing inhabitants of that place of trial and suffering by the assistance they find in it to hasten the time of their deliverance. A sacrifice wherein everything is holy, in Him to whom it is offered, in the victim who offers Himself, and in the end for which it is offered; and finally, a sacrifice which rejects every other oblation, annuls every strange offering, absorbs in itself alone all merit, all adoration, all homage due the Supreme Being, is certainly alone worthy of bearing the name of sacrifice, alone capable of producing all its effects. And these are only a part of the properties attributed by the Fathers and doctors of the Church to the sacrifice of

the Mass. And the Church, in the ceremonies of the Mass, which I will explain in the due course of time, points out most clearly its advantages. We will consider these prerogatives in a general manner, in order that we may be able to form an idea of the greatness of the oblation.

Sacrifice has always been looked upon as the principal duty of religion, and the most essential mark of the supreme homage which is due and which belongs alone to the Sovereign Majesty of God. Hence we read in the Book of Exodus, "He who sacrifices to gods other than the true God shall be put to death," 22:20. It is to God alone then that we offer the sacrifice of the Mass; and to whom else would we offer it? The victim we offer is an eternal victim, an immortal and divine victim; in a word, we know that He is a God. Can we be ignorant of the fact that God alone is worthy of such a victim, and to offer this to any other, would be to dishonor, disgrace and profane it.

We are accused of offering the sacrifice of the Mass to the Blessed Virgin, and the Saints, but in order to discover the fallacy of this accusation one has but to read the liturgies and the canon of the Mass. Neither in the Greek nor in the Latin Church has the sacrifice of the Mass ever been offered to any one except God alone, for in the Mass all the prayers are addressed to Him. We make commemoration of the Saints in the Mass, yes; but there is a great differ-

ence between this and offering the sacrifice to them. We make commemoration of them because God Himself has glorified them, but we never say, I sacrifice to thee, O Peter; I sacrifice to thee, O Paul. We make commemoration of the Saints in order to ask their assistance, their intercession with God. To offer the Mass to anyone but God would be idolatry, the crime most abominable in the sight of God.

It is quite certain that in the first ages of the Church commemoration was made of the martyrs in the sacrifice of the Mass, still the sacrifice was never offered to them. We make commemoration of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints to obtain their intercession with God, to honor them as the principal members of Jesus Christ, and the companions of His victories, to rejoice with them in their triumph, to give thanks to God for it, and to excite ourselves to imitate them.

But now, why do we offer the sacrifice of the Mass, what end do we propose in so doing? The sacrifice of the Mass is offered for four great reasons or ends.

The first great end of the sacrifice of the Mass is to adore God, and certainly there can be no higher honor paid to Him. Could we honor Him in a manner more worthy of Him, a manner more proportionate to His sovereign majesty? We offer Him a victim equal to Himself; He sees a God co-eternal with Himself humbled and annihilated

to honor and glorify Him, and this reason is common to the sacrifice of the Cross and that of the altar. The honor which Jesus Christ pays to God is enhanced by circumstances peculiar to the Eucharist. If Jesus Christ, clothed with mortal flesh, consents to die for the honor and glory of God the Father, He in a certain sense owed Him the life which He received from Him only on condition that it would be sacrificed to Him; but, having consummated His humiliation and sacrifice in the most perfect manner, having purchased the glory of immortality at so high a price, having by so many titles merited to enjoy the glory of the Father infinitely glorious and immortal, He seems to despoil Himself anew of His glory and immortality, when He conceals Himself under the species of corruptible matter, when He condescends to be present on our altar only to there renew the memory of His death, where this innocent lamb is again slain, although in a different manner—that is to say in an unbloody and mystic manner—where He permits His body and blood, always so closely united, to be represented as separate, where by virtue of the sacramental words, as by a sharp sword the priest of the sacrifice separates His body and blood under the different species, where He accepts, without dying, all the symptoms of a real death, this second annihilation is not less perfect than the first. This continued oblation is a continual avowal of the sovereignty of God's being, which answers to his great-

ness and His eternity, since it is the humiliation and annihilation of a God always living and immortal, yet always in a condition of death before Him.

The Mass is an Eucharistic sacrifice, that is to say, a sacrifice of thanksgiving offered to God to thank Him for His favors. Gratitude is an essential duty on the part of the Christian; it is not a council nor is it a work of supererogation, for, says St. Paul, "in all things give thanks, this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you all." (Thess. 5:18.) And St. Augustine tells us that this duty constitutes the principal and most essential part of the worship of God, of religion and of Christian piety. It was to fulfill this duty that God instituted a sacrifice of thanksgiving for the benefits received from Him. These sacrifices of the Old Law, as we said on a former occasion, were only shadows of the sacrifice which Christ Jesus consummated on the Cross, and which He continues to offer daily on our altar; this august sacrifice was instituted as a testimony of our gratitude. The Son of God has left to His Church this abridgment of the wonders of love, that it might be for us a continual memorial of His favors, as in the days of old He commanded the manna to be kept in the ark of the covenant in order that it might recall to the Jews the paternal providence with which He fed them in the desert. And for this reason the Mass is called the Eucharistic sacrifice because it is a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

Without this sacrifice what could we offer to God for all the favors He has conferred upon us? And especially for the supernatural and incomparable gift of His own and Only Son? How could we find a means of repaying Him for what we have received? He gave us a Redeemer, and that Redeemer was His only Son, the splendor of His glory, the figure of His substance, a God equal to Himself, and to repay this gift we should offer Him nothing less than a God. Jesus Christ has abundantly provided for our want. The Son of God who was given to us gives Himself for us, He places Himself in our hands in order that we may offer Him to the Eternal Father in the sacrifice of our altar, and in this way there is a perfect equality between the gift received and our gratitude for the gift. If by the Incarnation we are indebted for a God, we offer Him a God in return in the Eucharist, and if it is not possible for us to make a more worthy present, it is simply because God was not able to give us a more precious gift.

The Mass is a sacrifice of impetration, wherein we offer to God what is most efficacious in moving Him to grant our request. What offering do we make in the Mass? We offer the Son who was given to us, and, according to St. Paul, after this gift nothing can be refused us: *cum illo omnia nobis donavit.* (Rom. 8:32.)

Our prayers to be agreeable to God should be offered through Jesus Christ, and in the name of Jesus

Christ, by whose merits they are sanctified. Christ as a mediator presents them to His Father, who receives them from Him and favorably hearkens to them. Where does Christ act as Mediator in a more special manner than in the Mass? As a priest of the sacrifice He acts as Mediator, and since He is a priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech, He uninterruptedly performs the functions of His priesthood. In the sacrifice of our altar He daily presents to His Father the blood which He shed for us on the Cross. Placed between God and man, He bears our prayers heavenward and brings us graces and benedictions in return. On our altar He is as an ambassador of the high council who makes our wants known to God, and brings to us glad tidings of the mercies which are granted us in His name and through His merits.

Our prayers, when joined with those of Jesus Christ, are not mere human prayers, they become imbued with the sanctity of Jesus Christ and are divine, they constitute one and the same prayer with that of Jesus Christ, for in the sacrifice of the Mass everything is common with Jesus Christ and ourselves. He offers Himself for us; we offer ourselves with Him. He is the priest of His sacrifice; we are associated in His priesthood; He is the victim of the Church which is His body; the faithful who are its members are victims with Him and make one and the same victim with Him. The prayer which He makes for us in the

oblation of His body we make with Him and through Him; hence it follows that whatever we ask by virtue of His priesthood moves the Heavenly Father and causes Him to grant the graces we stand in need of.

And lastly the Mass is a sacrifice of propitiation; since it is the same in substance as the sacrifice of the Cross, it is the same blood that is offered on the altar. Jesus Christ appears before His Father the same as He did on Calvary; He is present on our altar only to recall His sorrows, and to offer to his Eternal Father every drop of blood He shed for the reconciliation of sinners; it follows, therefore, that the sacrifice of the Mass is not inferior to the sacrifice of the Cross, and consequently should produce the same effects; it is not less efficacious to wipe away our sins and to purify our conscience from dead works.

To say that the sacrifice of the Mass is not truly propitiatory is to say that the body and blood of Jesus Christ are not pleasing to the Father nor capable of propitiating Him in our favor. The very thought were blasphemy. We believe that where Jesus Christ is present He is the victim of propitiation for our sins: *ipse est propitiatio pro peccatis nostris*. We believe with St. Paul that wherever the blood of Jesus Christ is present it purifies our hearts from sins of which we are guilty. "The blood of Christ will cleanse our conscience from dead works." (Hebr. 9:14.) We believe on the word of Christ Himself that His body is offered for us in the Eucharist, that the blood which

is shed for us on our altar flows for the remission of our sins: "This is my blood which shall be shed for many for the remission of sins." are the words of Christ Himself. (Matt. 26:28.)

When we say that the sacrifice of the Mass is propitiary we do not wish to be understood as meaning to say that it is sufficient for us to assist at Mass to gain forgiveness of mortal sin; it is in the sacrament of penance our reconciliation is effected. The effect of the Mass is to appease God, to obtain grace and disposition necessary to receive the sacraments worthily. The sacrifice of the Mass reconciles us with God in the same manner as the sacrifice of the Cross, since it is the same sacrifice continued. But the sacrifice of the Cross, whence the sacrifice of the Mass derives all its efficacy, does not wash away sin, neither does it remit them. This takes place only by the application which the Sacraments make to our souls of their merits. They are like so many channels through which the blood of Jesus Christ, once offered on the Cross and is daily offered on our altar, flows in upon our souls. The sacrifice of the Cross is the source which supplies these channels; it is that never failing fountain whence the prophet Isias invites us to draw "Waters of the Lord with joy," *haurietis aquas in gaudio de fontibus Salvatoris*. (Is. 12:13.)

We have already seen that the Mass is a sacrifice of impetration, that is to say, it is offered up to obtain the graces which are necessary for us, and we have

a right to these graces by the merits of the sacrifice of the cross; they are applied to us by the sacrifice of the Eucharist. All the members of the Church militant (that is the Church on earth), no matter what their condition, no matter what their state in life, no matter what may be the nature of their obligations, can share in it; there the mind and heart of the faithful are filled with vivifying grace; there the passions are subdued; there inclinations changed and the desires of the heart rectified. There Jesus Christ makes Himself all to all, and there it is that as head He infuses into His members the spirit that animates them.

This sacrifice is serviceable also for the souls in purgatory, to console them in their sufferings and to deliver them from their trials.

The earliest ages of the Church furnish most decisive testimony of the custom of praying for the dead every time the sacrifice of the Mass was offered. Prayers for the dead are to be found in every liturgy, and St. Cyril of Jerusalem, who lived about the middle of the fourth century, instructed the newly baptized concerning the necessity of prayer for the dead in the liturgy he explained for them. "We pray," said he, "for all those who depart this world in our communion," believing that their souls are greatly comforted by the prayers which are offered for them in the sacrifice of the Mass. And St. Augustine informs us that this was the custom of the Universal

Church, and tells us, moreover, that his mother, St. Monica, when dying, besought him to make remembrance of her whenever he was at the altar, and adds that before her coffin was lowered into the grave he offered for her the sacrifice of redemption. St. Cyprian tells us that in his day and long before his time it was the constant practice to offer the sacrifice of the Mass for the faithful departed. And Turtullian, who lived about the end of the second century, looked upon prayer for the dead in the sacrifice of the Mass as a Divine tradition.

The sacrifice of the Mass is then a sacrifice of expiation for the Church suffering; that is, the faithful in purgatory. Deprived of the consolation of offering it with us, they, nevertheless, reap the benefit of this salutary oblation. The blood of Jesus Christ flows daily on the altar, and penetrates this place of penance and at every instant souls purified by this expiatory effusion are borne to the place of their eternal repose.

The sacrifice of the Mass is never offered for those who die in sin or enemies of God, and who are forever under the anathema of implacable wrath and vengeance. "In vain," says St. Augustine, "would you offer for them the sacrifice which they disregarded during life either because they did not receive the grace of the Sacraments or because they received them unworthily, and have heaped up for themselves treasures of wrath, not of mercy." They are those of whom

it is said in the Scripture: "In whatever place they fall, there shall they lie."

It is a great misfortune for the sinner to be abandoned by God in this life, but there is no sinner so abandoned that he is utterly without resource. It is only in hell there is real abandonment. Divine mercy is refused only to those already damned; there is always hope for the sinner except in hell. No longer is there a victim of propitiation, no longer an agreeable and profitable sacrifice for the damned, for them there is neither comfort nor consolation. Christ Jesus is no longer their Savior.

Let us then ask of God these infinite mercies, frequently offer to Him the sacrifice of the Mass, and in so doing let us say: Regard, O Lord, the merit of Thy Son, look down upon Thy Christ humbled and annihilated; He pleads for grace for us. Mingle the tears of our contrition with His blood, our penance with His penance, in view of the adorable sacrifice He will grant the pardon of our sins; He will confer His grace upon us and enable us to merit life eternal.

OBLIGATION AND MANNER OF HEARING MASS

“Do this for a commemoration of me.”—Luke 22: 19.

It is our interest, as well as the duty of our religion, and our gratitude to assist at Mass as frequently as possible, since we there find the source of those graces which are so necessary to enable us to lead a Christian life here on earth; it is by so doing that we render to the Lord that perfect homage of which we ourselves are absolutely incapable; and since without it we can never adequately compensate our Heavenly Father for all the favors He has conferred upon us and which he incessantly confers upon us daily. All Christians are, in a certain sense, ministers of the Most High constituted to offer to Him through the hands of the priests the most excellent of all sacrifices by joining their intentions, their desires with those of the Church; and the Apostle St. Peter assures us of this quality when he says to all the faithful of the new dispensation, “*You are a chosen people, you are the order of the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the purchased people.*” It is to you, then, that Jesus Christ says to-day, although in a somewhat different sense: “Do this for a commemoration of me.”

Our instruction will be on the great duty of our religion; having explained in former instructions the nature and excellence of the sacrifice of the Mass, I will endeavor to point out to you with what zeal and assiduity we should be present at Mass, and what sentiments of piety should animate us during this holy action. It is a fact beyond all doubt that the faithful who have arrived at the age of reason are obliged by the precept of the Church to hear Mass on all Sundays and holy days, although we cannot point out the precise origin of this precept, which began to be observed in the days of the Apostles; for the faithful assembled the first day of the week, which is the Sunday, to celebrate the sacred mysteries as we learn from the twentieth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and from the testimony of the Fathers of the first ages. St. Leo tells us that it was customary to celebrate Mass many times on the greater festivals because the people could not all assist at the one Mass, as the Church was not large enough to accommodate them. St. Cæsar of Arles very strongly reprimands those who do not wait until the end of Mass on Sundays and who go away before the priest gives the benediction. The Council of Aige, in the year 506, formulated a canon expressly to correct this bad practice. The Church has particularly commanded the faithful to hear Mass on Sunday and on holy days which should be kept as Sundays, because it is the most holy and the most useful action that we can per-

form on those days that are consecrated to the service of God. As that precept regards the worship of God there is no room to doubt that they who have arrived at the age of reason commit mortal sin when being able to assist at Mass on Sundays and holy days fail to do so. Two causes, however, dispense from this obligation—the first is the physical and absolute impossibility of being present. As is the case with prisoners, those who are sick, and upon the sea, and those who are obliged to travel through countries or places where there is no Mass said on those days. The second is the moral impossibility of being present. This happens in the case of those who are recovering from sickness, and who would suffer considerably by going to Mass on account of weakness, and being at a great distance from the Church, women bearing children and who are approaching the time of confinement, those who cannot go to Mass without running the risk of meeting with considerable loss or causing a loss to others, those who are taking care of the sick, or young children. The Church, a kind and indulgent mother, does not intend to oblige her children to obey her law when there is question of any grave difficulty or peril in executing what she commands; but in this matter we must be careful not to flatter ourselves, and to imagine difficulty and danger where none exists; we may excuse ourselves, but God will not take the excuse from us.

As regards the other days of the week, although

we are not obliged, nevertheless, it is very useful for us to assist at Mass as often as we can, and this for two very strong reasons: First, because by this one act of piety we acquit ourselves of our whole duty towards God; and, second, no matter what else we may do, there is nothing pleasing to God only in as much as it relates to that sacrifice. When we assist at Mass properly we acquit ourselves of our whole duty towards God.

What is our duty towards God? To adore Him, to pay Him sovereign homage by consecrating ourselves to Him through love. Now it is by the sacrifice of the Mass that we can perform this duty, since, as spiritual priests, you offer Him a victim worthy of Him, and since, by uniting yourselves to Jesus Christ in perfect love, you offer to God in the most perfect manner, all the worship which rational creatures can pay him; and since by this consecration you give yourselves to Him and by this oblation you pay all the debt you owe.

Since by sin we become the object of God's wrath, the misery to which we were reduced obliges us to appease Him by repairing the injury done His infinite majesty. And where can we perform this duty better than when the truly propitiatory sacrifice is offered, that sacrifice by which Jesus Christ continues to offer His humiliations to His Father, His blood, His death, for the expiation of our sins; where He incessantly intercedes for us and pleads our causes? Is

there any other means of obtaining pardon without the sacrifice of Jesus Christ? Our penance, our satisfaction could never please God sufficiently and we would still remain covered with our sins. Are we not obliged to acknowledge our want and misery, do we not feel at every moment the necessity of the assistance of His grace, either to avoid temptation, which leads us to evil, or to do good? How are we going to perform this duty except by the sacrifice of the Mass; since our prayers cannot go directly to God, because they must pass through the mediation of Jesus Christ, who as priest of the sacrifice should present them to His Father, and by the virtue and merit of His sacrifice make them efficacious for us. Every grace that we can ask is beyond doubt the price of His blood. Lastly, we should give thanks always for the gifts we have received, and which we receive at every moment from His goodness. Without the sacrifice of the Mass we cannot fulfill this obligation that our gratitude can equal the gift received; it is only by this sacrifice that we can return in proportion to what we have received.

These so important and essential duties, which are the foundation of the precept of the Church which oblige us to hear Mass on Sundays and holy days, are our ordinary daily duties, and consequently we should endeavor to assist at Mass every day. What eagerness did not the first Christians show in this regard! Nothing could prevent them; they left every-

thing to profit of this great favor: the edicts of emperors, the fury of persecution, danger of life, threats of torture, distance of place or difficulty of assembling; nothing could dampen the ardor of their zeal. At the present day what lukewarmness, what indifference! We can scarcely find time to assist at Mass on the days commanded. Do you not neglect your business for many other useless affairs, for many affairs detrimental to your salvation? The glory of God is of very little interest to some people now-a-days, and do we not every day require the gift of Heaven? And where can we ask for it more efficaciously, and where will we obtain it more surely than in the sacrifice of the Mass? You may say, perhaps, that you perform many other good works, that you offer all your actions of God. Very well, but bear in mind that more of your actions are pleasing to God only in as much as they relate to the sacrifice of the Mass, and why? Because, since we have been corrupted by sin, we are no longer worthy of approaching God ourselves, and we have nothing to offer Him capable of honoring Him. He receives nothing from us except that which is presented conjointly with the offering which His Son, Our Mediator, makes to Him, and as in our pilgrimage here below we have only the Mass wherein Jesus Christ Himself makes the oblation, it is in this sacrifice that we should join all our prayers so that by this union they may be made pleasing to God in Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ.

In order to fulfill the precept of hearing Mass, it will not suffice to hear a part of the Mass; we must hear all the Mass; it will not suffice to hear part of a Mass said by one priest and part of a Mass said by another priest; we must assist at the one sacrifice entirely. When I say entirely I do not intend this word to be taken in the strictest sense; a person who is not present at the introit does not fail to hear Mass, but any one who comes in after the Gospel has been said does not hear Mass. We must, however, not consider ourselves free from sin if we come in just at the Gospel, and in order to be free from reproach we should endeavor to be present at the commencement of Mass.

If we wish to assist at Mass in a manner becoming a Christian, we should do so with attention, with devotion and modesty which so holy an action requires. But, unfortunately, instead of assisting at Mass with a lively faith, with a firm hope, and ardent love for Jesus Christ, who sacrifices Himself for us, we appear there but too often with a mind filled with profane ideas, we grow weary after a short while, we freely give way to distraction, we allow our eyes and our hearts to wander on every sort of objects; many can hardly bring themselves to bend their knees, and the great majority content themselves with reciting a few prayers without ever thinking of the great mystery of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His passion and death, which are renewed and represented on the altar. Can

we hear Mass in that manner? Should I not rather say that less sin would be committed if such remained away entirely rather than assist without piety or attention. How should we occupy the time of Mass? In fulfilling our duty towards God, in making known to Him our wants, in adoring Him and thanking Him for all His favors.

If we wish to honor God by the sacrifice of the Mass, to honor Him as He should be honored and He expects to be honored by us, we should unite ourselves with Jesus Christ, prostrate ourselves with Him before the Divine Majesty and humbly confess our want. Like unto Jesus Christ, obedient to the voice of His ministers, let us prove His power by our unreserved obedience. Like Jesus Christ, immolated, let us immolate ourselves, if not by a true death, at least by a spiritual and by a total destruction of the inordinate desires of lust. Powerless as we are to acknowledge the graces of the Lord in a worthy manner, let us turn to the sacrifice of the altar. Jesus Christ is present, He gives Himself to us to be offered by our hands to His Father; let us offer Him and offer ourselves with Him, and we will accomplish all our duty of gratitude. The time of Mass is the proper time to negotiate with God, the proper time to gain His gifts; whether we ask for conversion or a pardon of the most enormous crimes, or whether we ask for perseverance, whether we ask for some other temporal or spiritual favor, the most appropriate and at the same

time the most favorable time is the time of Mass. Ask, then, for what we want, ask it with confidence in the name and by the merits of Jesus Christ, and God the Father will lend an attentive ear to our prayer and grant our requests.

PUBLIC PREPARATION FOR MASS

“By faith Abel offered to God a sacrifice exceeding that of Cain, by which he obtained a testimony that he was just, God giving testimony to his gifts, and by it he being dead, yet speaketh,”—Heb. 11: 4.

THE letter of the law separated from the spirit brings death to him who practices it. The sacred Scripture furnishes us with a most striking example of the truth of this assertion, in the person of Cain, and experience confirms it in the conduct of a large majority of Christians who assist at the sacrifice of the altar. Cain, the prince of murderers, offered the sacrifice prescribed of the natural law; he offered that which seemed to him best fitting for the holocaust, the best fruits of the trees he cultivated, and outwardly acquitted himself of his duty towards His Creator. When we consider him in the performance of this religious exercise, it is almost impossible for us not to look upon him as a faithful worshiper. But his heart robbed his sacrifice of its worth and value, because it was not right before God, and because, unlike his brother Abel, he walked not in the path of innocence and simplicity.

During the time of Mass there are many in the Church who are just like Cain. They never neglect

the duty imposed upon them by the Church; they always are present at Mass, and although a great many add a marked indevotion to an affected negligence, yet many act like true worshipers. Are they ever animated by a pure faith, a lively and active faith, a firm and tried faith? Does it sanctify their offering or consecrate their oblation? Are they actuated by that spirit which should dispose their soul for prayer? Do they prepare themselves for the most holy act which religion prescribes? It would be very difficult to think so, for the greater number. For even among those who consider it a duty to unite themselves in spirit with the sacrifice of the Mass, there are a great many ignorant of the manner in which they should hear Mass properly, and in what consists the preparation that should be made for so holy an act.

The Mass is the sacrifice of the people as well as the sacrifice of the priest. The people, then, should have the same intention when assisting at and offering it through the hands of the priest, as the priest himself. The Mass is offered for four great ends: To honor God and to pay Him the sovereign homage which is His due; to thank Him for His favors; to ask pardon for our sins, and obtain graces necessary for the living and the dead. And the Church on earth unites with the Church in Heaven to perform these duties with Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ. Those who assist at Mass should have these intentions. I

admit that if we assist at Mass with respect and faith, and have a general intention of joining with the priest in offering the sacrifice through his hands for all the ends for which the Church offers it; to ask Almighty God for all that which the priest asks for at the altar is, absolutely speaking, quite sufficient. If such be our intention, all our prayers made with faith are good and useful and we derive a benefit from assisting at Mass. But it is much better and more conformable to the spirit of the Church, to follow the priest entirely in all the prayers he recites; to unite ourselves with him not only in a general kind of a way, but still more in a particular manner in all his prayers and ceremonies. In this manner we enter into the spirit of the sacrifice, the prayers and ceremonies of the Mass, for everything is common to the priest and people. The people make the general confession with the priest, the people sing the Introit, Kyrie Eleison, Gloria, Gradual, Credo, Offertory, Sanctus, Agnus Dei and the thanksgiving after communion. The people answer *Amen* to all the prayers of the priest, which supposes them to be attentive to the prayers. The Epistle and Gospel are read for the instruction of the people, who stand during the Gospel as a mark of their attention. And in the act of the sacrifice it would appear from the prayers that the people should offer it conjointly with the priest, and it is for this reason that the priest raises his voice when finishing the canon, and the other parts which

he recites in a low voice, so that the people by answering *Amen* may publicly testify that they join in all the prayers. If we do not follow the priest in everything we do not of course enter into the spirit of the sacrifice.

The sacrifice of the Mass is so grand, so august, the victim offered is so pure and holy, we should always prepare ourselves for assisting thereat. However holy may be the preparation which the priest makes in private when he puts on the sacred vestments, when at the foot of the altar he acknowledges himself filled with miseries and that he requires a special grace from God to offer so holy and divine a host as the adorable body of Jesus Christ. Such are his sentiments as he stands at the foot of the altar, where he prepares himself to ask for grace to ascend the altar in a holy manner. The people, who as a general thing make no special preparation before coming to Mass, should be present at the public preparation which is common with them and the priest and which is so proper to gain for them the grace to share in the fruit of the sacrifice.

At the foot of the altar the priest makes the sign of the Cross, and every Christian should do the same at the beginning of all his actions to invoke the help of God in all his wants. This sign is made in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. In the name of the Father, who sent us His Son to be sacrificed and who gave us a right

to offer Him as ministers, being one and the same fruit with Him. In the name of the Son, who is given to be immolated and who has associated us with His priesthood. In the name of the Holy Ghost, by whom it is offered and by whose virtue and sanctity we have a right to this holy victim. In the name of the Father, by whose authority we sacrifice His Son. In the name of the Son, in whose person we sacrifice Him. In the name of the Holy Ghost, in virtue of whom we enjoy the privilege. In the name of the Father, to whom we offer the sacrifice. In the name of the Son, whom we offer in the sacrifice. In the name of the Holy Ghost, by whom we offer the sacrifice.

After the priest has made the sign of the Cross he recites alternately with the people (who are represented by those who serve Mass), the Forty-second Psalm to mutually excite themselves to approach with confidence and joy to the altar where the sacrifice is to be offered. This psalm was composed by David during the time he was being persecuted by Saul and forced to live in exile, in the hope of one day returning to Jerusalem and presenting himself at the altar of God, there to offer sacrifice. The application of this psalm is quite natural and may be readily seen. We are exiles from Heaven, our only true home; we should then animate and console ourselves with the thought of one day thereat. The altar is a figure of heaven, we should approach it with confidence and a holy joy,

the priest commences the psalm by a verse which he repeats at the end: *Introibo ad altare Dei*, I will approach unto the altar of God, and the people answer, To the God who filled my youth with joy; he then says alternately with the people the psalm *Judica me, Deus*, Judge me, O God, because, as I have already said, the people as well as the priest should excite themselves to approach the holy altar with sentiments of faith, confidence and joy, there to offer the sacrifice through the hands of the priest. This psalm is not said in masses for the dead nor during Passion Tide, because on these occasions the Church refrains from everything joyous in her public offices, and this psalm, as I have already said, is one of joy.

After reciting this psalm, the priest and people make a general confession to God, to ask His mercy; the people by the prayers of the priest and the priest by the prayers of the people. This confession is necessary to prepare ourselves for the sacrifice of the new law, and was required by God Himself for all the sacrifices of the old law. When the high priest offered the emissary goat for the sins of the people, he made a general confession at the same time, as we learn from the Book of Leviticus, where we read 16: 20, 21: "After he hath cleansed the sanctuary, and the tabernacle, and the altar, then let him offer the living goat, and putting both hands upon his head, let him confess the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their offenses and sins."

When the confession is made at the foot of the altar, it is made to God, to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to St. Michael, to St. Peter, Paul, to all the Saints, and to the priest who is the spiritual father of the congregation, to testify in the presence of God, of the Saints of the Church in Heaven and on earth, that we are guilty of many sins. We make the confession to God who is offended, to the Saints who will be present at the judgment on the last day with Jesus Christ. We ask the Church in Heaven and on earth to implore God's mercy for us and among the Saints we name those whom the Church looks upon as our principal protectors after Jesus Christ. When we make the confession we strike the breast in imitation of the publican at the door of the temple who obtained mercy by acknowledging himself a sinner and struck his breast as a sign of contrition.

After the general confession the priest alternately with the people recites those prayers taken from the Scripture to ask God for the remission of sin and grace to be sufficiently pure to offer the sacrifice worthily.

He then goes up to the altar and prays in a low voice to invoke in a special manner the prayers of the Saints, whose relics are upon the altar. The people should say the same prayers at the time with the priest; this is the intention and the spirit of the Church and it is for this reason that the priest before reciting them in a low voice says in a loud tone of voice, *Oremus*, that

is, *let us pray*, in order to excite the people to pray with him and in the same manner as he does.

The words *Dominus vobiscum*, that is, the Lord be with you, are to be found in many places of the Old Testament, and the answer, *et cum spiritu tuo*, or “and with thy spirit,” seem to be taken from St. Paul, who, when writing to Timothy, said: “May the Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit.” Before reciting any of the prayers the priest and people should mutually wish that the Lord would fill their minds, because it is the Holy Spirit who prays on us. When the priest ascends the altar he kisses it, and does so every time that he either leaves or returns to it, in order to show his respect and love. The priest kisses the altar as the place whereon our Lord was crucified, for what is the altar but the seat of the body and blood of Jesus Christ? and according to St. Ambrose the altar is the form or figure of the body of Jesus Christ, on which He sacrificed Himself and offered Himself in His body.

In solemn Masses the priest then incenses the altar, and during this time we should raise our hearts to God and redouble the fervor of our prayers.

The use of incense in the public service of the Church is of ancient origin. True, during the first three centuries, it was never used, because during that time it was much profaned in the service of idols, and the Church thought proper not to use it in the worship of the true God, but as soon as the meetings of the faith-

ful were free from all idolatrous perfumes, the Church began to use it in her solemnities. The custom became quite general about the fourth century, as we learn from the Apostolic canons.

The use of incense in the Church was not intended, as some falsely assert, to expel any unpleasant odors. Nor was it necessary when the faithful assembled during the time of persecution in subterranean caves. It was only after the restoration of peace to the Church that it began to be used, and Churches of that period were spacious and well aired. The Church had a higher, a more spiritual, a more mysterious view. Incense was a symbol or sign used in the Church to represent important truths which are expressed by these religious ceremonies. Incense is blessed to teach us that nothing profane should be used in the service of Almighty God, and that we ourselves are unworthy of participating in it if we do not by our prayers bring upon ourselves His benediction, which render us worthy of honoring Him. Incense is offered to God to render Him homage as our Sovereign, and to testify our wish that our prayers may ascend to Him as an agreeable odor. In burning incense on the altar we show that in the holy place creatures should be consumed for His service and glory. Hence Christians formerly said the same prayer which the priest says at the present day: "May the Lord enkindle in us the fire of His love and the flame of eternal charity." Incense has always been taken as an expression of the

prayers we offer to God and of our desires that they would ascend to Him as a sweet perfume; it is looked upon as a figure of our interior dispositions, and this is what the priest experiences when he says, "Let my prayers ascend to Thee, O Lord, as a sweet incense."

Incense is the best symbol that could represent what our prayers should be; incense ascends only by the activity which is given to it by fire, and our prayers, which in reality are only the desires of our hearts, cannot reach God unless they are animated by the fire of divine love. And if the incense is a symbol of our prayers, it is still more expressive of those of the Saints which in the Scriptures are represented as a perfume offered to God. "And when He had opened the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty ancients fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the Saints." (Apoc. 5:8.)

In solemn Masses the Cross and the altar are incensed. The Book of Gospels is incensed as a mark of respect we should have for the Word of God, and the good odor which is diffused by those who practice this word. We incense the offering which is made to God to supplicate Him to receive them, and the people are incensed to admonish them to raise their hearts to God by the fervor of their prayers. This honor shown to them is only relative, that is to say, it should revert to Him who alone deserves honor, empire and glory.

And woe to him who would attribute it to himself as something that belongs to him.

The incense is used at the time when the faithful should renew the attention and fervor of their prayers. At Mass after the offertory, which is the commencement of the sacrifice, and at Vespers during the Magnificat, which immediately precedes the prayer called the Collect, a prayer which the Church before ending the office addresses the wants and desires of the faithful to God.

We incense the relics of the Saints, the dead bodies and the tombs of the faithful. We incense the relics, that is to say, the precious remains of the bodies of the Saints, to testify that the good odor of Jesus Christ which was diffused by them during life, still continues after their death. From the commencement of the Church God has shown in a miraculous manner that the bodies of the Saints possess an agreeable odor. We read in history that the body of St. Polycarp, martyr, bishop of Smyrna and disciple of St. John, gave forth an agreeable odor equal to that of the most costly incense, at the time he was put to death, and was felt by all who approached the place of execution. We incense the dead bodies of the faithful to testify that their memory is in good odor in the Church and that the Church offers her prayers for them as well as for the living.

Thus it is that the Church by her holy and mysterious ceremonies endeavors to raise our minds to God

by things sensible and external, because, being made up of body and soul, we require things sensible to raise us up to things spiritual, but if we assist at these ceremonies without knowing their meaning, or the end for which they were instituted, it is for us a great misfortune. We should then remember the preparation we should make when we assist at the sacrifice of the Mass, and this preparation consists principally in uniting our intention with the intention of the priest, and to purify ourselves by a general confession of all our sins. If we assist at Mass with these sentiments of faith, of piety and contrition it will be for us a source of grace and benediction for time and happy eternity.

FROM THE INTROIT TO THE GOSPEL

“Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak.”—Psalms 6:3.

THESE words, “have mercy,” are very often used in the Scriptures, and there is no sentiment more natural to one who knows his own weakness and has even a faint idea of God’s mercy. The Church uses them very often in her prayers; it is one of the first which she addresses to God before offering the holy sacrifice, and these words have become so familiar, that at the least approach of danger, we naturally exclaim: Lord, have mercy on me; but if we pronounce these words without the sentiments which should accompany them they will be of no use or benefit to us. God Himself has declared this by the mouth of His prophet, Isias: “Thus saith the Lord, upon whom shall I look with compassion and mercy. Upon him alone who knows his wants, considers himself truly poor without my assistance. Upon him who, knowing his faults, is filled with shame, and whose heart is broken by contrition; upon him who, attentive to the consideration of my judgments and my justice, will be penetrated with the salutary fear which my word inspires.” If we were to examine our hearts concerning the dispositions which up to the present have always accompanied this prayer, what answer would they give? We have often said

with the priest or chanted with the choir: Kyrie Eleison, that is, Lord have mercy on us; but inattentive to the meaning of these words, we have, perhaps, recited in a cold and heartless manner the prayer best calculated to inspire us with sentiments of compunction and sorrow.

We will endeavor to learn something concerning the antiquity of this prayer and the reason why the Church asks us to recite it in the Mass.

This part of the Mass requires our earnest attention and is composed principally of the Introit, the Kyrie Eleison, the Gloria in Excelsis, the Collect, the Epistle and the Gradual. The beginning of the Mass is called the Introit or the entrance, because the choir sing the Introit as the priest ascends to the altar; it is the entrance of the priest and the people, and the introduction to the prayers of the Mass. The Introit is generally composed of two or three verses taken from the psalms, or other parts of the Scripture, in order to obtain from the Holy Ghost the grace of prayer so necessary for the Mass. During the Introit the mind and hearts of the faithful should be filled with holy desires to dispose themselves for the celebration of the divine mysteries. The Gloria Patri, or Glory be to the Father, is said at the Introit, because there could be no better commencement for the Mass than to praise the Blessed Trinity to whom the sacrifice is offered.

The words Kyrie *Ἐλεησων*, Christe *Ἐλεησων*, are Greek words, which mean, Lord, have mercy on us, Christ

have mercy on us. The custom of reciting this prayer in Greek and not in Latin is very ancient, in fact, its origin is lost in antiquity. Following a custom which comes down from the days of the Apostles, the Church uses some Hebrew words in the prayers of Mass. The word *Amen* is a Hebrew word, meaning let it be so. Alleluia is another Hebrew word, which means praise God. Hosanna is also Hebrew and means Glory to God and Sabaoth, which in English means the God of armies. The Church makes use of these Greek and Hebrew words to show the unity of the Church, notwithstanding the diversity of languages. The Kyrie Eleison or Christe Eleison is said nine times, in imitation of the chant of the Angels, who are composed of nine choirs, and address the prayer three times to the Father, three times to the Son, and three times to the Holy Ghost, to adore equally each of the three persons of the Blessed Trinity.

The prayer, Kyrie Eleison, which is the beginning of the supplication of the Mass, is the most ancient, the most common among nations, and the most frequently repeated in the Gospel. All Christians should be eager to unite their voices and say to God with the most lively sentiments of a contrite heart: "Lord, have mercy on us." We cannot repeat this prayer too often, both on account of the multitude of our sins and the great mercy we expect from God's goodness. We should ask this grace in the same manner as did the blind man of Jericho, with the perseverance of the

Canaanite woman, with the humility of the ten lepers, with the eagerness of the many persons who were heard when they persisted in crying out, "Lord, have mercy on us."

The Gloria in Excelsis is a hymn, the first words of which were composed by the angels and by them taught to mankind; the remainder was added by the Church. The Greeks call this the grand doxology, in contradistinction to the minor doxology, which is the Gloria Patri. The early Christians recited this hymn in their private as well as their public prayers. This hymn was sung by the early Christians in honor of God and of Jesus Christ, as is mentioned by many of the most ancient writers. Toward the end of the second century it was chanted to refute the heresy of Artemon, who attacked the divinity of Jesus Christ; this hymn has been recited in the Church from time immemorial.

As this hymn is a canticle of joy and solemnity, it is not said in Masses for the dead, nor on vigils, nor on Sundays from Septuagesima to Easter, nor during Advent. At all other Masses, after the faithful have implored God's mercy, they are reminded of what God the Father did for man in sending His only begotten Son on earth for our redemption; they praise Him, they thank and implore Him through Jesus Christ to be favorable to them; and it is for this reason that the Gloria in Excelsis is sung or recited.

Gloria in Excelsis Deo, that is, "Glory to God in

the Highest.” When we glorify anyone, it is because we have a high idea of that person and wish to publish that idea by giving him the praise he merits for some special act. The Incarnation of Jesus Christ affords the blessed spirits an infinitude of reasons for praising God, and a new means of adoring Him as He deserves. They celebrate His praises at the time of the birth of Jesus Christ, on account of the great wonders which God worked through this mystery, and because from that time there appeared on earth a worshiper worthy of God; for what greater glory could be given to God than the adoration of a God clothed in humanity, and who should one day become a living victim, always holy, and always agreeable to God. “Et in terra pax hominibus,”—and peace on earth to men. Jesus Christ who renders the glory which is due to His Father, brings peace to us, pacifying by His blood all that is in Heaven and on earth; but to whom is this peace given? To men of good will, who are loved and cherished of God, that is to say, who love Him and who are subject to Him through love. *Laudamus te*, we praise thee, to praise, that is, to proclaim the good deeds we know of any one, to publish his virtues and good qualities. We can praise God only imperfectly, because He is infinitely above all that we can either think or say; nevertheless, we should praise Him as far as we are able, and say, *We praise Thee, O Lord*, as the inexhaustible source of our admiration. *Benedicimus te*—We bless Thee as the source of our benefac-

tion, and with a heart full of gratitude. Adoramus te—we adore Thee as our Creator, our Protector, our Sovereign good, and our last end. Glorificamus te—we glorify Thee; we wish to consecrate all our thoughts, words, and actions to Thy honor and glory; we wish to employ our whole being in Thy service, since it is from Thee that we have received all that we have. Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam—we thank Thee for Thy great glory, that glory which shines forth so admirably in the union of the divine with the human nature; the masterpiece of the power, wisdom, and goodness of God. Domine Deus, Rex coelestis, Deus Pater Omnipotens—O Lord God, King of Heaven; God the Father Almighty! All the preceding words are addressed to the three divine persons who are afterwards invoked separately. We always commence with the Father, God Almighty. Domine, Fili unigenite, Thou who art our Lord, the only begotten Son of the Father, He in whom He is well pleased.

When the Church speaks of this divine Son, who is her spouse, she cannot end abruptly with all she wishes to say. Her delight is to be with Him and make known to Him all her wants with a loving and tender confidence. All these expressions mark her love, and reawaken new motive for gaining the salvation she desires. Jesu Christe, Thou who art our Savior, the anointed by excellence. Domine Deus,

Lord who art God, and consequently can do what Thou willest. *Agnus Dei*, Thou who art the Lamb of God, the only victim agreeable to God; the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world; the Lamb who, by His blood, conquered the earth; the Lamb to whom all creatures cry out: Benediction, honor, and praise to Him who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb. . . . *Filius Patris*, Son of the Father, why this again? Because Jesus Christ, taking a new life by His resurrection; because, in a still more particular manner, the Son of the Father who glorifies Him as the eternal Pontiff. *Qui tollis peccata mundi*, miserere nobis. Thou who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. *Qui tollis peccata mundi*, suscipe deprecationem nostram. Thou who takest away the sins of the world, hear our humble prayer. The faithful, by the exceeding great charity of the Savior who takes upon Himself the sins of the world in order to share in the infinite love, should say: Thou who hast taken upon Thyself to expiate the sins of the world, hear the prayer we make to Thee, asking Thee to expiate ours. *Qui sedes ad dexteram Patris*, miserere nobis, Thou who sittest at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us; Thou who hast already redeemed us, Thou who enjoyest the reward of this redemption, being seated at the right hand of the Father, make us feel the effects of Thy mercy and power. *Quoniam tu solus sanctus*. Because Thou alone art holy, the only holy Pontiff, stainless, separated from sinners,

higher than the heavens, who, consequently, art not obliged to offer victims for Thyself before offering for the people, as does the priest who represents Thee at the altar. . . . Tu solus Dominus, Thou alone art the Lord by nature and acquisition, having redeemed us by Thy blood. Tu solus Altissimus, Jesu Christi, the only Most High, equal to God, with the Holy Ghost, in the glory of the Father. Cum Sancto Spiritu, in gloria Dei Patris, Amen.

After the Gloria in Excelsis the priest kisses the altar, and, turning towards the people, wishes them the graces and benedictions of Heaven, and imparts peace to the congregation. From whom has he received it himself? From Jesus Christ, who is Himself the altar of his sacrifice, in whom alone all nations have been blessed, and who alone, by virtue of His blood, brought peace to Heaven and earth. The priest kisses the middle of the altar, because there is placed the consecrated stone, which represents Jesus Christ in a more particular manner, He being the corner-stone of the Church.

The priest turns towards the people, because it is quite natural to turn towards those to whom we wish to speak or those whom we wish to salute, and says “Dominus vobiscum”—the Lord be with you—and after the people, represented by the choir or the altar boys, have answered “Et cum spiritu tuo”—and with thy spirit—the priest, going towards the Book, then turning his eyes to the crucifix and raising his hands,

says: "Oremus"—let us pray—to show that he raises his soul to God, and when he raises his eyes and his hands he invites the people to follow his example and raise their hearts to God.

The prayer which the priest recites is called a Collect, because it is made for the congregation and is a summary of what he should ask of God. In ancient times, when the priest said "Oremus," the congregation prayed for some time in silence, and the priest, after this silence, collecting, so to speak, all the desires of the people, said the prayer which, on this account, is called the Collect. We have still a vestige of this custom in Masses said on fast days. On those days, when the priest has said "Oremus," the deacon says "Flectamus genua"—let us kneel—and, after a pause, "Levate," which means rise up.

When the priest says the Collect and the greater part of the prayers of the Mass, he keeps his hands apart and a little raised, to conform to the ancient manner of praying, which is very often pointed out in the Psalms and the Epistles of St. Paul. The people also prayed with their hands raised, and it is a very natural gesture to express the eagerness with which we expect what we ask for. The early Christians not only raised their hands, but also extended their arms, in imitation of the manner in which Jesus Christ prayed on the Cross. After the Collect and the other prayers of the Church the people, through the choir or the altar boys, answer *Amen*, to show that they

have made the same request of God that the priest did. The spirit of the Church, consequently, is that the people should attend to the prayers and join with the priest who says them to obtain from God what he asks in the name of the congregation.

We may judge of the dignity and sanctity of the sacrifice by the ceremonies which precede it. All we have described up to the present is only a part of the preparation; our petition for mercy, the praise of God, and the prayers which we address to Him through the merits of Jesus Christ to obtain His favors and graces are only a preparation for the sacrifice, and this is not all. There is the reading of the Sacred Scripture, the Epistle, and the Gospel. This was the way in which the Jews always commenced their public services, and it is the manner in which the first Christians began their service on Sunday. They considered the reading of the Scriptures as one of the most excellent means of sanctifying the Lord's Day, and from the very earliest ages the sacrifice was never offered until after the reading of the Scripture. This reading is called the Epistle, because it is generally taken from the Epistles of St. Paul or the other Apostles. The Church reads the writings of the ambassadors of God before the Gospel, and this is done in imitation of Jesus Christ, who always sent one of His disciples first to the place where He himself went afterwards.

At solemn Masses the congregation sits during the reading of the Epistle, because among the Jews and

the first Christians the Epistle was a kind of conference or sermon in a dialogue form, when those present could make remarks, as we learn from the writings of St. Paul. (1 Cor. 14: 26.)

After the Epistle a verse of the Psalm is either said or sung, or some other prayer taken from the Scripture is said, to give the people time to think over the Epistle just read. This is called the Gradual, because in Rome and elsewhere it was chanted or recited on the steps of the pulpit or reading desk. It is called Gradual from the Latin word *gradus*, which means step, from, as I said, its being said on the steps of the pulpit.

The Gradual is followed by an Alleluia. This, as I have already said, is a Hebrew word which means praise God. The Church preserves this word because it is very forcible in the original and cannot be translated into any other language in so short and expressive a manner; besides it inspires an emotion or transport of joy which it is impossible to express by any other one word. And on this account the Church multiplies it in greater festivals and suppresses it on days of mourning and in times of penance. She does not dispense us on those days from rendering to God the praise that is His due, for in her office before Easter, instead of Alleluia, she says: "Praise be to Thee, O Lord, Thou Who art the King of Glory." She simply interdicts the sentiments of joy which should accompany this word of praise.

The people who cannot follow these different prayers should, during the Epistle, Gradual, and Alleluia, acknowledge their gratitude to God for having called them to the knowledge of His holy law in preference to so many who still slumber in darkness and the shadow of death; they should reflect on the excellence of this special favor; pray to the Holy Ghost who dictated the oracles of the prophets and Apostles, to point out to them the sense of these mysteries, to give them a knowledge for and a love of the truths contained in the words of the sacred writers, and especially should they cherish the good thoughts with which the Holy Ghost inspires those who, in sincerity, seek the true way.

THE GOSPEL AND THE NICENE CREED

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings and that preacheth peace; of him that showeth forth good, that preacheth salvation, that saith to Sion: Thy king shall reign.”—Isaias 52:7.

THE first steps which Jesus Christ took for the instruction of the people led Him to a high mountain, where, being seated, as says the sacred historian, He spoke to the multitudes who surrounded Him concerning the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. To Him, then, must be applied these words quoted from the prophet, since He alone has truly announced the gospel of peace. The first words of this Divine Preacher were an assurance and consolation for those who are poor and humble and persecuted: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land. Blessed are they who suffer persecutions, for justice sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” Well, then, may we say, “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of Him who bringeth good tidings and that preacheth peace,” since He comes to teach mankind to seek for happiness in that which is painful to human nature and revolting to their senses; and what makes this proceeding still more interesting is to

know that it is not limited to the time of His ministry. The gospel of peace, announced every day in the celebration of the divine mysteries, either by the priest when he officiates alone, or by the deacon when the oblation is accompanied with greater solemnity, recalls to our mind the fact that it was a God who was our instructor and master.

This is the most interesting part of the Mass of the Catechumens, who, as we will see later on, were obliged to leave the Church after the reading of the Gospel, and it is the most useful for the Christian who knows how to employ his faith. This reading of the Gospel, preceded by prayer, the instruction of the Apostles, the verses of the Psalms, and the writings of the prophets, represent that plenitude of time when the Son of the Father of the family, having been announced by His servants and His ministers, comes himself to cultivate His vineyard and sow good seed in His field. We will follow this ceremony in all the circumstances which accompany it, and endeavor to learn its importance.

The Gospel is Jesus Christ's own words—what He said and what He caused to be written; it is the word which He pronounced outwardly for the instruction of all mankind. Jesus Christ did not speak for the men of His time only. The words of men, the production of limited or finite minds, are ordinarily addressed only to those to whom they speak; such, however, is not the case with Jesus Christ—He spoke for

all future ages. So when we hear the Gospel read it is Jesus Christ Himself we hear speaking; it is Jesus Christ who addresses His words to us; it is Jesus Christ who instructs us in particular. Let us not envy the happiness of those who, during their mortal career, heard Jesus Christ preach; and let us not say: Happy are they who saw Him; many of those who saw Him put to death, and many among us who did not see Him have believed. The precious words which fell from His sacred lips are written for us, are preserved for us, are recited for us; it was of us, as well as of the Jews, that Jesus Christ said: "Many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them; and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them." (Matt. 13:17.)

This truth that it is Jesus Christ who speaks, who preaches, who instructs when the Gospel is read is the principle of the conduct of the Church which, since the sacred books of the Gospel have been written, has always had them read at Mass. There is no ancient liturgy wherein the Gospel is not marked out, because those who assist at the sacrifice should know the precepts and actions of Jesus Christ and publicly testify their respect and love for them. And on this account the reading of the Gospel is preceded and followed by many ceremonies which should excite in us a most respectful love.

The deacon—that is to say, the one who, in holy

orders, comes nearest the priest, and who, by virtue of his ordination, received power to announce the Gospel solemnly—at solemn Masses puts the book on the altar. The custom is respected for its antiquity; in the early days of the Church the book of the Gospels was brought to the altar with great ceremony, at the commencement of the Mass, to teach us to respect it; and which we should show, not only for the one used on the altar, but also for the one kept at our own homes. The words of Jesus Christ are written in that they are the words of a God. Is it not a shame for Christians to think that the Jews have more respect for the tablets of the law, and that the Mohammedans have more respect for the words of their false prophets than we have for the Holy Book which contains the instructions of life eternal.

The deacon and the priest, before reading the Gospel, recite the prayer *munda cor meum*: “Almighty God, purify my heart and my lips; Thou who didst purify with a burning coal the lips of the prophet Isaias, deign to grant me the same grace through the effect of a mercy which is not due me, so that I may worthily announce Thy holy Gospel.” This prayer shows the importance of this sacred function and the grandeur of the ceremony, but the spectacle becomes still more interesting when the sacred minister places the holy Gospel on his breast and then, kneeling before the priest, asks him to bless the work he is about to perform, and the priest says: “May

the Lord dwell in thy heart, and His spirit be upon thy lips, that thou mayest announce His Gospel with the respect it requires, and the dispositions He has prescribed for you." Then the deacon brings the book of Gospel to the place where it is to be sung, being preceded by acolytes, who bring incense and lighted candles, and there he incenses the book in the center, to the right and the left.

Here there are three solemn and remarkable ceremonies: First, the incense; second, the lights; third, the position of the assistants when the book of the Gospels is opened. First, the incense is blessed by the priest and is carried before the book of the Gospels, so that the perfume which it exhales may be a sign of the good odor which God diffuses in our hearts by making Himself known by His holy Gospel. Second, lighted candles are borne as a sign of the joy the Gospel affords, and to show that Jesus Christ is the true light, who enlightens us by His word. Third, the Gospel, preceded by the incense and lights, leads the faithful to assume a position which indicates new respect, for the people stand to show that they are ready to obey the voice of Jesus Christ, which they are about to hear. After the book of Gospels has been placed in position the deacon or priest incenses it three times to show that it is the source of the sweet perfume which should diffuse duly into our minds.

Whether the priest recites the Gospel at the altar

or the deacon sings it at the corner of the sanctuary, they begin by saluting the people, saying "Dominus vobiscum"—The Lord be with you—and the people answer, "Et cum spiritu tuo"—And with thy spirit. They mutually wish each other that God would be with them: that He would speak to their hearts, so that the sound of the holy words would not fall uselessly on their ears. The priest or the deacon, as the case may be, says: "Initium" or "Sequentia sancti Evangelii"—The beginning or the continuation of the holy Gospel. At these words the priest, and, in solemn Masses, the deacon, makes the sign of the Cross with his thumb at the beginning of the Gospel, to show by this sign of the Cross that it is the book of Jesus Christ crucified, and to ask, through the merits of this Cross, that the reading of the Gospel may make a salutary impression on the minds and hearts of the hearers; and then the priest, deacon, and the people make the sign of the Cross on their forehead, lip, and breast. What a fund of instruction is contained in this simple, yet holy, ceremony!

Why do we make the sign of the Cross on the forehead? To imprint the memory of Jesus Christ on our minds and to fill them with the instruction which He came upon earth to give. Could there be anything more sublime? What is the meaning of the word Gospel? The tidings of the Kingdom of Heaven, of peace, of grace, of glory, the fulfillment of the promises; but how empty and vain are these cere-

monies for those who are insensible to the truths of the Gospel, who never think of it, who never concern themselves about it. Second. The sign of the Cross is made on the forehead to show that we are not ashamed of the Gospel; by this mysterious sign we openly and publicly profess our belief in the truths of the Gospel, and we say frankly with St. Paul: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel." But woe to us if, after making in presence of the altar a solemn profession to follow the Gospel, we turn traitor and renounce it by our works.

The second sign of the Cross is made on our lips. What is the meaning of that? That we must confess with the lips what we believe in the heart; that we should love to speak of the truths of the Gospel and make them known. This is the testimony which Jesus Christ expects from us, and how many occasions have we not for so doing. Are we not often forced to listen to railleries against holy things which worldlings applaud? Whence that rashness so dangerous and so common in our days, with which men without education, without the slightest knowledge of divine sciences, boldly express themselves about truths they neither know nor understand? Are we not often obliged to listen to maxims formally opposed to those of the Gospel? such, for instance, that as far as temporal goods are concerned, each one should look out for himself and provide for himself as best he can, that no one is happy unless he is rich; that there is a

time for retreat and a time for pleasure; that certain faults are not grievous sins—maxims which are anathematized by Jesus Christ in the Gospel. On all such occasions we are bound by the sign of the Cross which we make on our forehead to openly express the defiance of the contrary truths contained in the Gospel. It is a kind of secret apostasy if, after we leave the Church, we yield to the damnable facility of listening to the licentious words of some friend of suspected faith, to that cowardly timidity which closes our lips, to that fear of offending those who sin in our presence.

And, lastly, the third sign of the Cross is made on our heart to impress the words of the Gospel on our souls, in order that we may affectionately accomplish them. And whilst making this sign of the Cross we say: “Gloria tibi, Domine”—Glory be to Thee, O Lord, who art come to be our light and to give us the necessary means to work out our salvation.

At the end of the Gospel the priest kisses the Gospel book to show his respect, the joy and love which the divine words inspire; the assistants say “Laus tibi, Christe”—Praise be to Thee, O Christ. It is quite proper to praise Jesus Christ, who, by His word, came to dispel our darkness and lead us in the way of truth. The priest, having read the Gospel, says: “Per evangelica dicta deleantur nostra delicta”—May our sins be washed away by the words of the

Gospel; for these divine words have a force and a peculiar virtue to excite in us repentance for our sins and the love of God, who washes them away.

All these ceremonies and the solemnity with which the Gospel is announced teach us that we should hear it with the respect which we owe to Christ Himself, and this our divine Savior taught us when He said that the happiness of those who hear and practice the Gospel is preferable to that of the Blessed Virgin when she bore Him in her womb. We should hearken to the Gospel the same as if it was Jesus Christ Himself who spoke to us, and this is the reason why the Gospel is read in a loud voice. We should not lose one word of it, for, as when we receive the Eucharist, we are not to allow the least particle to fall, why should we not consider it a crime to neglect to hear a word of Jesus Christ the same as to neglect His body? The body Jesus Christ, which is our spiritual food, is not only the bread and wine which is offered on the altar; the Gospel is also the body of Jesus Christ, and when we read or hear the Gospel we are as it were children of the family seated around the table of the Lord, whereon we partake of the Heavenly food. It is not only at Mass that we should hear the Gospel; we would have good reason to complain if the Church allowed us to know the last will and testament of our own Lord only by parts, and in such a short and rapid manner, and which is sometimes not heard by many; the Church, the spouse of

Jesus Christ, wishes the book which contains His divine oracles to be in the hands of every Christian, and wishes it to be translated into every language, so that all her children may seek there their daily food. Whence, then, comes this frightful indifference of so many Christians who never open the sacred Book, and who do not keep it in their homes? To this deplorable insensibility we must attribute that deluge of spiritual evils with which we are inundated on every side—that coldness of faith, corruption of morals, and the almost total extinction of Religion. If God formerly commanded His people to read incessantly the law which He gave them, and to meditate upon it day and night, how can we dare call ourselves followers of Jesus Christ if we neglect to hear His word?

Neglect to read the Gospel when it can be done is a sin of such a nature, according to the Fathers, that those who do not know how to read are not excusable on account of their ignorance of what may be learned there, and to neglect to be instructed in it. We very often find that the most uneducated persons are capable of learning and repeating, word for word, ten or fifteen and twenty times more verses of a profane song, and, after this, how can they pretend to excuse themselves on the cause of ignorance that they never learned any of the Gospel? Without being able to read, they have sufficient genius to learn what the devil teaches them for their destruction, and still they

cannot learn from the lips of Jesus Christ the truths which are necessary for their salvation.

The Gospel is followed by the Credo, which is an abridgment of the Christian doctrine and is called the Apostles' Creed and the symbol of faith. The word symbol signifies a sign which is used to distinguish one thing from another. In the army the password is a sign which distinguishes the friend from the foe, and in the Christian army the saying of the Creed the Christian from those who are not of the fold. Hence comes the ancient mode of speech: Give the sign of the Christian, say the Creed. On this account it is called the symbol of faith or the symbol of the Christians, and it is also called the Apostles' Creed because it was composed by them and is the symbol recited many times in the daily prayers. There was no other Creed during the first three ages. The first Christians learned it by heart and never wrote it, for fear of its falling into the hands of the pagans, but in the fourth century, when Arius denied the divinity of Jesus Christ, the fathers of the first general council, held at Nice, explained and amplified the second article of the Apostles' Creed, concerning the Son, and shortly after, at the second general council, the article on the Holy Ghost was explained, against Macedonius, bishop of Constantinople, who attacked His divinity; and, lastly, a pious and learned author composed a fourth symbol, more diffuse than the others, and this was attributed to St. Athanesius, the

most illustrious of the defenders of the faith. The Creed which is recited at the Mass is the Nicene Creed; this was not used in the first ages of the Church; at present it is said only on Sundays and other days of greater solemnity. When the Creed is said the priest stands in the center of the altar, turned towards the Cross; he raises his hands, and at the same time raises his mind and heart to Heaven, and the external raising of his hands is a sign of the internal elevation of his soul; he afterwards joins them to assume his ordinary position, which is to keep his hands joined when he has nothing definite to do.

The congregation should join with him and say the Creed, because it is a profession of faith which should be made by all Christians, whether cleric, laic, men or women, learned or ignorant. As I have already explained the Creed in detail, there is no necessity of here repeating the explanation, but will simply say that during the Creed we should solemnly profess our firm belief in all that is read in the Gospel. During the Creed we kneel from the words *Descendit de coelis* and remain kneeling until after the words *homo factus est*—He came down from Heaven and was made man—to adore in this humble posture the abasement of Jesus Christ in coming into the world and His Incarnation. At the end of the Creed the priest signs himself with the sign of the Cross and the congregation should do the same, to show that we look forward to the Resurrection and the future life,

in which we believe and hope that, by the virtue of Jesus Christ, who has arisen to the glorious life as an assurance of our resurrection, the resurrection of the faithful who are His members, and lead them to Heaven, which He opened by His ascension, that they may become sharers in the blessed immortality which He purchased for us at the price of His blood.

OFFERTORY OF THE PEOPLE AND OFFERING OF BREAD AND WINE

“In a contrite heart and humble spirit let us be accepted.”

—Daniel 3:39.

THIS is the only disposition known to the Church as pleasing to God, who has often explained it in the Sacred Scriptures and declared that He would look with favor only upon the poor; that He will hear only those who are humble of heart. The Church borrows this prayer from one of the prophets to offer it to the Lord when about to commence the oblation of the sacrifice. She has already pointed out to us this two-fold disposition in the confession which serves as a preparation for the Mass; but she teaches us that here is the time and place to make use of it, if we wish this offering, which is always pleasing to God, since it is His own Son who is humbled in presence of His divine Majesty, to be useful to ourselves by our union with the dispositions of this divine Savior.

We pass now to a very interesting part of the Mass, since it is, in a certain sense, an essential part of the sacrifice. If we were to reflect on this part of the Mass we could find matter for many instructions. Yet, wishing to be brief, we will try not to neglect any

of the important ceremonies which compose it, and to draw the most useful conclusions.

Up to the present we have spoken only of the prayers and ceremonies which precede the act of sacrifice. Whatever ideas we may have gained from these preparations concerning the grandeur and sanctity of the sacrifice, we will be still more struck with its excellence when we see the Church act in reality and commence to offer the victim.

In ancient days the august sacrifice began by a ceremony capable of striking terror in the mind of the most dissipated, and of inspiring respect, devotion, and fervor in the hearts of the hardened. That was the public and solemn proclamation ordering the penitents and Catechumens to leave the Church. Immediately after the Gospel the Deacon cried out in a loud voice: "Catechumens retire!" They went, then, to receive the priest's blessing, who imposed hands upon them and prayed for them according to their own state, after which they retired in silence and humility. The penitents did the same; they never remained in the Church after the sacrifice—only those who had preserved the grace and innocence of baptism or those who, having lost it, had regained it by works of condign penance, were allowed to remain.

This ancient discipline of the Church proves the high idea they had of the sacrifice. It recalls to mind the purity, the sanctity, and innocence of those who were allowed to be present at the sacred mysteries.

This discipline no longer exists. The Church, full of mercy or more indulgent towards the sinner, not only permits them to be present when she offers the sacrifice, but she commands them, under pain of sin, to be present at the sacrifice on Sundays and holy days commanded, and if the ancient custom is changed, her spirit is always the same. When she excluded sinners from assisting at Mass she wished by this exclusion to make them feel their unworthiness and inspire them with a holy eagerness to merit by their penance to assist at and share in it. And when she admits them to the sacrifice she wishes that, in view of the sacrifice of propitiation which is to be offered for their sins, their hearts may be moved to repentance for their sins and that, finding they are not considered worthy of being united with the faithful to make with Jesus Christ but one victim, they may at least offer to Him the sacrifice of an humble and contrite heart at the same time that the Church offers Jesus Christ as a victim of propitiation for their sins.

At the time of the offertory we should enter into sentiments of contrition, acknowledge our dignity, and groan like the publican of the Gospel, who did not dare so much as to raise his eyes to Heaven when he prayed in the temple. You whom God, by His grace, has preserved from crime, or healed from deadly wounds, renew your attention and devotion when the sacrifice is about to begin. The Church is about to offer Jesus Christ; she is about to offer herself with

Jesus Christ; be prepared, then, to offer yourselves with her; enter into the spirit of Jesus Christ and of His Church. The priest and the people begin this part of the Mass by wishing one another the assistance of God. *Dominus vobiscum*—May the Lord be with you and with thy spirit. Then the priest, turning towards the altar, says: "*Oremus*"—Let us pray. These words point out on this occasion, more so than at any other time, that we should join with him, that we should pray with him and pray in the same manner as he does; that all private prayers should cease at that moment, since all the prayers which the priest will say thenceforth are common to these and himself.

After this, exhortation to prayer is made. In order to understand this first act of the sacrifice we must distinguish two kinds of oblations. The first is the oblation of the people, who offer to the priest that which is to be offered in the sacrifice. The second is the oblation of the priest, who offers to God, in the name of the congregation, that which he received from the people to be changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The oblation of the people up to the fourth century was made in silence. At the time of St. Augustine the custom of singing the Psalms during the offertory of the people was introduced at Carthage, and this is what we call the offertory, because it was sung whilst the people made the offering, which offering is the first action of the sacrifice. The

sacrifice requires three essential things: a congregation to offer, a priest to sacrifice what the people offer, and the communion of the priest and people in the offering made. The first part, then, of the sacrifice is the offering, and this the people should make; on this account the Mass is the sacrifice of the whole Church; the part which the people have in the Mass is the matter of the sacrifice, which they should offer, and which should not be presented except by the people. Such is the teaching of the Church.

The Church could at once place in the hands of the priest the matter for the sacrifice, but she wishes him to receive it from the people. She considered that in the sacrifices of the Jews, which were only a figure of her sacrifice, the people offered the victim to be slain. The victim which the Church sacrifices is none other than Jesus Christ, but she cannot have that victim except by consecration, and the consecration cannot be made except by a priest; the people cannot offer a victim which they have not as yet. But if the people cannot offer the victim, they can at least offer the bread and wine which is to be changed into the victim; the people give the fruit, that which he should consecrate, and, in consequence of the consecration of that which the people give, they share in the sacrifice.

But if the offering should be made by the people, and if it constitutes part of the sacrifice, since they no longer, as formerly, present the bread and wine

which should be consecrated, the sacrifice must be incomplete and the people have no part in it. True, the people do not now offer the bread and wine for the consecration. And the reason of this change is because the priests felt obliged to offer at the altar bread made with greater care than that which was generally offered by the people, and on this account the faithful made presents to the Church and left to ecclesiastics all which was necessary for the service of the altar. Thus, although the bread intended to be the matter of the sacrifice is no longer expressly and distinctly offered by the people, it must always be looked upon as the offering of the people, because it is procured through their gifts, and consequently it is always true that the first action of the sacrifice should be made by the people, and hence the sacrifice of the Mass is the sacrifice of the people, as well as the sacrifice of the priest.

The matter of the Eucharistic sacrifice was pointed out by Jesus Christ, who consecrated bread and wine. And the Church requires this bread to be unleaven, that is to say, there should be no yeast in its composition; it should be made of pure flour, and that it should be marked in such a way as to distinguish it from the ordinary bread in common use. This bread is called a host, that is to say, a victim, because it is destined to be changed into the body of Jesus Christ, who is the host and the victim of the sacrifice. The Latin Church prescribes the use of unleavened bread at

the altar, that is, bread without any yeast, and in this she is authorized by the example of Jesus Christ, who instituted the Eucharist after He had partaken of the paschal lamb, and who, consequently, made use of unleavened bread, because from the time that the paschal lamb was slain it was forbidden to either eat or preserve leaven bread.

After the saying of the prayer of the offertory the priest spreads the corporal upon the altar (this is a linen cloth and is called corporal because it is destined to touch the body of Jesus Christ); he then removes the pall, which is another linen cloth which is intended to cover the chalice. He then takes the paten, that is, the small plate which holds the host, and, first raising his eyes towards Heaven, he raises the paten, in order to offer God the host thereon, and whilst holding the paten raised he says the prayer: "Suscipe, sancte Pater omnipotens," that is, Receive, O Holy, Omnipotent, and Eternal God, this pure host which I, Thy unworthy servant, offer to Thee, who art my God, living and true. I offer it for my sins, my offenses, and negligences, which are numberless; for all those here present, and for the faithful living and dead, so that it may profit me and them unto salvation and eternal life.

Let us renew this prayer. Receive, O Holy Father, Omnipotent and Eternal God. The Church always addresses the oblation to the Eternal Father, in imitation of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who,

when on earth, offered His sacrifice to the Father. Receive this pure host. That which is on the paten is only bread, but it is bread which is offered only because it is to become the true bread, the body of Jesus Christ, the only pure and faultless victim. In the new alliance, inanimate things are no longer offered to God; there is no victim in the new alliance but Jesus Christ; if then she offers bread and wine it is because they are to become the body and blood of Jesus Christ. It is this body and this blood she intended to offer, and for this reason she calls the bread a pure host, not that it is so, but because it is soon to become so by the change which will be made of it into the body of Jesus Christ, whom I, thy unworthy servant, offer; the oblation is made by a priest, who should always acknowledge himself a most unworthy servant, on account of the infinite disproportion between him and the divine victim he is about to offer; to Thee, my God, the living and the true. He offers it to the true God, to whom alone the sacrifice should be offered, and to the only living God, as says the prophet Daniel. "For He is the living and eternal God," for my innumerable sins, offenses, and negligences he offers it to obtain pardon of his sins, which are so numerable they cannot be counted; and for all those present the Church pays especial attention to those who assist at the sacrifice. The priest never prays for himself without praying for them, and for all Christians living and dead; by this

the Church means all those who are in her communion, living and dead, in order that this pure, stainless host may be profitable to me and to them; he prays (1) for himself, (2) for those present, (3) for all the faithful for salvation and life eternal; for the principal end he should have in view of offering the sacrifice is that it may procure for us salvation and life eternal by the remission of our sins. At the end of this prayer the priest makes the sign of the Cross with the paten over the corporal, and places the host in the center of it, to show by this sign that he places the host on the Cross, where Jesus Christ is offered to His Father for our sins.

Since we are permitted to offer the sacrifice to the Most High, and since, in His mercy, He has given us the only victim which is agreeable in His sight, capable of appeasing Him and rendering Him propitious to us, we should offer this victim to conceal our unworthiness and to obtain pardon for our sins, for this is the only means given us of affecting a reconciliation with Him. The victim which He gives us is charged with our sins to expiate them by the continuation of His sacrifice. With what humiliation and fervor shall we not offer it! The sins for which we ask mercy are numberless; and no matter who or what we are, as says St. James, we fall into many sins—sins of omission and sins of commission. Why, then, should we not have recourse to His mercy; why should we not humble ourselves, not only for

the faults we have confessed, but many others which may have escaped our memory, and endeavor, by every means in our power, to make ample satisfaction for them.

Such is the meaning of our sacrifice, as prefigured by the sacrifice of the emissary goat, which the high priest offered every year, and over whom he made a confession of all the sins of the people, and this is why the priest offers the sacrifice for all present. How consoling this thought of the Church! With what zeal should it not inspire us to be present at Mass as often as possible. We should pray to the Lord, to Him who promised that when He would be raised up He would draw all after Him; that if the weight of our iniquity make us unworthy of appearing in His sanctuary and of joining with the priest in offering to Him the holy sacrifice, that He would break the chains which hold us captive in sin; that He would give us a true contrition and sorrow, that we may approach Him; that the Heavenly Father, to whom He offered Himself in sacrifice, may look upon us with compassion; that the multitude of our sins may be washed away from His sight by the sanctity, the obedience, and charity of the victim of propitiation, and that the fruit of our oblation may be for us a holy life in time, and a life of happiness in eternity.

WINE AND WATER, OFFERING OF THE CHALICE

“And my delight is to be with the children of men.”—Prov. 8:31.

THESE words were applied by the Church to our divine Savior, Jesus Christ, and we may reasonably ask why this eagerness on His part to dwell with the children of men. Is not He omniscient, and when He inspired the prophet to write those words, did He not know that mankind would repay all His loving advances with ingratitude? Did He not know that even among His own He would be deceived, that in His very Church He would find those who would treat His sacrifice with criminal indifference, and that very often the most efficacious means of salvation would be converted into means of damnation for those to whom they were offered? Did He not foresee all the insults, all the profanations which would be heaped upon His sacrament of love, the sacrament of the Eucharist? Why, then, does He desire to live among mankind? What delight does He promise himself from dwelling among the children of men? “My delight is to be with the children of men.” This mystery of love is unfolded in the sacrifice of the Mass, and especially in the ceremony we will endeavor to explain.

Suscipe, Sancte Pater—Accept, O Holy Father, etc. After this prayer the priest makes the sign of the Cross with the paten over the corporal, and then places the host upon it, to signify that he places Jesus Christ upon the Cross, where He offered himself to His Heavenly Father for the sins of mankind. Then, going to the corner of the altar, he puts wine into the chalice, and to this wine he adds a few drops of water. Wine, as well as water, is the matter of the sacrifice. The priest, in putting water into the chalice, imitates the example of Jesus Christ, who, at the last supper, consecrated the Paschal cup, which, according to the Jewish rite, there was wine mixed with water. The very earliest fathers teach that water was mixed with the wine which was consecrated by our divine Savior, for there is a mystic reason for the mixing of water with the wine which is well for us to understand. It is intended to represent the union of the faithful with Jesus Christ; the union of His Church, so that Jesus Christ and the faithful together constitute one only victim which is offered to God, as the water and wine, when mixed together, make but one and the same liquid. According to St. John in the Apocalypse, the water represents the people: "The waters are people," and as by this mixture the water and wine are inseparable in the chalice, so the Church cannot be separated from Jesus Christ in the sacrifice.

The union of the people with Jesus Christ to consti-

tute one and the same victim is a truth which answers all the objections against the sacrifice taken from the prayers after the consecration, wherein we ask God to deign to receive the sacrifice which is offered to Him and to look upon it with favor, for here certainly there is no reference made to the real body of Jesus Christ, which is always agreeable to God, but to His mystic body, which is the Church, that is the faithful. This is the union we will endeavor to explain.

We have already said, when speaking of sacrifice in general, that man as a creature should offer himself in sacrifice to his Creator. But man sinned, and, in consequence of that sin, became unworthy of being offered as a victim to God, since God cannot and will not accept any but a pure and spotless victim. We said, also, that Jesus Christ was substituted for the ancient victims, and was substituted for man himself, in order to furnish us with a means of paying a debt which, up to that time, we were incapable of doing, namely, to offer a sacrifice capable of repairing the injury done to God by sin. Jesus Christ, substituted for man, is indeed a victim equal to God, capable of rendering all the homage due to God. But must man always remain incapable of offering himself? True, Jesus Christ is offered for us, but does He dispense us from the obligation of offering ourselves with Him? No, in becoming a victim for us He does not free us from the obligation imposed upon

us by our very nature, namely, to offer to God in sacrifice our body, our soul, our mind, our life, in a word, all that we are. But how did we become worthy of being offered to Him? Jesus Christ took upon himself our iniquities, in order to expiate them and to wash them away with His blood, so that we might become victims worthy of being presented to God, as says St. Paul, Ept. Tit. 2: 14: "Who gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself an acceptable people." It was not sufficient for Christ to have sanctified the Church, and, after having purified it in the waters of baptism, that it should be without spot or blemish. He must present it in that state to His Father, and in order to do so, that is, to present it without spot or blemish, He unites Himself with it; He incorporates Himself with it. Christ and the Church, then, are but one, and in offering Himself to the Father, He offers the faithful also, and in this way exercises the function of high priest. And when the faithful, on their part, offer Jesus Christ by the hands of the priest, they also offer themselves with Jesus Christ, because they are His members, and in this way the Church, in the offering which she makes, is offered herself.

The union of Jesus Christ with the Church is represented by the mixture of the water and wine, for as water and wine, when mixed, constitute but one and the same liquid, so the faithful, represented by the

water and united with Jesus Christ, represented by the wine, constitute but one and the same victim in the sacrifice. The offering which is made in the sacrifice is the body of Jesus Christ, whole and entire, not only His real and natural body, but His mystic body also, which is the Church, of which the faithful are members.

The ceremonies and prayers which are said when the water is mixed with the wine are based on this truth. The priest does not bless the wine, because the wine represents Jesus Christ, who is the source of all benediction. He blesses the water, which represents the people; they should be blessed before they can unite or incorporate themselves with Jesus Christ. The priest does not bless the water in Masses for the dead, because, although the union and incorporation of the souls in purgatory with Jesus Christ is preserved after death, they are no longer capable of being blessed by the priest; they can no longer merit a blessing.

The priest, when putting the water into the chalice, says the prayer: "Deus qui humane substantie," etc., that is, "O God, who, in creating human nature, didst wonderfully dignify it, and hast still more wonderfully renewed it, grant that, by the mystery of this water and wine, we may be made partakers of His divinity, who vouchsafed to become a partaker of our humanity. Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy

Ghost, world without end, Amen.” God, in creating human nature, didst wonderfully dignify it (that is, by uniting two substances so different, a material and destructible body with a spiritual and immortal soul, formed to His own image) and hast still more wonderfully renewed (by the incomprehensible union of the divine with the human nature, by which He gives us a right, through this double prodigy, to ask for something still more consoling), namely, that we might be sharers of His divinity as He is a sharer of our humanity. He is Jesus, the Savior of His people; He is Christ, the image of the substance of the Father; He is Thy Son, our Lord.

After the people have been blessed and represented in the chalice by the mixture of the water with the wine, the priest, who spoke only in the singular number when offering the bread: “This immaculate host, which I, Thy unworthy servant, offer Thee,” now speaks in the plural number and says “Offerimus”—that is, “We offer.” The people offer and pray with him. The people should join with the priest and say secretly: “We offer to Thee, O Lord, the chalice of salvation, beseeching the clemency that, in the sight of Thy divine majesty, it may ascend with the odor of sweetness for our salvation and for that of the whole world, Amen.”

After the oblation of the chalice the priest bows his head, and, keeping his hands joined on the altar, says, whilst humbly offering himself to God with the

people: "In spiritu humilitatis," etc.—"In the spirit of humility, and with a contrite heart, let us be accepted by Thee, O Lord, and grant that the sacrifice we offer in Thy sight may be pleasing to Thee, O Lord God." Having offered the bread, which is to be changed into the body of Jesus Christ, and having offered wine mixed with water, which is to be changed into His blood, we desire to be changed ourselves, so that we may be capable of being offered to God as an agreeable victim; but this can be done only by the operation of the sanctifying spirit; we then invoke him that he may deign to change us at the same time that he is invoked to change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The priest then, extending his hands, raises them on high, and afterwards joins them to show by his gesture that he expects help from Heaven. He raises his eyes in imitation of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who always raised His eyes to Heaven when He invoked the omnipotence of the Father; he then lowers them and, looking upon the offering which is to be blessed, makes the sign of the Cross over the oblation, to show that it is by the virtue of the Cross that he hopes for the blessing he asks, and says the prayer: "Veni, Sanctificator"—"Come, O Sanctifier, Almighty and Eternal God, and bless this sacrifice prepared in Thy name."

We should remark here that although in this prayer there are many terms which seem to designate

God the Father, the prayer is addressed to the Holy Ghost, the third person of the Blessed Trinity. This remark is very important, and in order to appreciate its consequence, it will be sufficient to know that from this invocation for the change of the substance of bread and wine, we can always argue for the reality of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and for the real presence of the divine victim in the sacrifice of our altar. For why in the liturgy, and especially in the Greek liturgy, do we ask for the descent of the Holy Ghost? In order that He may animate, that He may vivify and sanctify the sacrifice. And how will this be done? By changing the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ and from this we may always conclude that the Holy Ghost is God, since in baptism He is equally invoked with the Father and the Son, and since at the mystic table He it is who changes the common bread into the body in which Jesus Christ is incarnated.

After the oblation the priest goes to the corner of the altar and washes the ends of his fingers. Besides the natural reason of propriety for this ceremony, there is also a mystic reason. By this same ceremony which takes place at the commencement of the sacrifice, the Church wishes to show that in order to offer it and to assist at it properly we should be purified from every stain of sin. The washing is not for the purpose of cleansing the body, for decency and propriety require that this should be done before entering

the sacred place. The washing of the hands signifies that we should be cleansed from every defilement of sin; the hands may be taken to signify our actions, and to wash them is to purify all our actions so that our soul may be cleansed from every stain. The water that is given to the priest at this time to wash his hands signifies the purity which belongs to those who are consecrated to God.

Each one should do interiorly what is represented by the external action of the priest. If the Church desires us to purify ourselves at the commencement of Mass by a general confession, in order to prepare ourselves for the sacrifice which we are to offer, she does not intend to exclude us from the second purification, which takes place so near the time of the great mystery in which we are to take such an active part, since it is the sacrifice of the people as well as the sacrifice of the priest. The spirit of the ceremony is to purify ourselves before God by a sincere detestation of every kind of sin, of every inordinate affection, so that we may not unworthily profane the sacred mysteries about to be celebrated, that we might raise to God as says the Apostle only pure hands, that is to say, that the purity of our hearts may make the sacrifice we are about to offer agreeable to God.

The ceremony corresponds wonderfully with the prayer which is said by the priest. *Lavabo enter innocentes manus meas*, "I will wash my hands among the innocent and will encompass thy altar, O Lord.

That I may hear the voice of praise and tell of all Thy marvelous works. I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house and the place where Thy glory dwelleth. Take not away my soul, O God, with the wicked, nor my life with bloody men, in whose hands are iniquities, their right is filled with gifts. As for me I have walked in my innocence, redeem me and have mercy upon me. My foot hath stood in the right path, in the Church I will bless thee, O Lord."

The Gloria Patri is said at the end of this psalm, but is omitted in Masses for the dead and during passion time, because this hymn of glorification is a hymn of joy which is not very appropriate in times of mourning.

The Church takes every precaution to secure respect for the august mystery, and in order to enter into her views we show our respect for the sacrifice and during the Lavabo or the washing of the hands say, O God, Thou who didst vouchsafe to wash the feet of Thy disciples before inviting them to Thy holy table, wash us also and not only our hands and our feet, but our hearts and our souls, that we may be wholly innocent and pure in Thy sight here below and merit the reward of the innocent in the life hereafter.

FROM SUSCIPE, SANCTA TRINITAS, UP TO THE SECRETAE OR SECRET PRAYERS

“In them and thou in me, that they may be made one.”

—John 17:23.

AFTER the priest in the name of the Church has offered the bread and wine separately and after he and the faithful have offered themselves in acknowledgment of the supreme dominion of God over them as creatures, and for the expiation of their sins, there is another general oblation which contains these special oblations and which explains this meaning and effects, and which comprehends all who take part in the sacrifice even though it be in different ways. God, Jesus Christ, the Saints of Heaven and the faithful on earth. God in the trinity of persons, and the only one to whom the sacrifice is offered. Jesus Christ the second person of the Blessed Trinity, who is offered in His humanity. The Church in Heaven and on earth is there offered as members of His body, but with a difference which it is very important for me to develop in order to justify all the terms or expressions of the Church in this prayer with which Protestants find so much fault, simply because they will not give themselves trouble to discern its proper sense or spirit.

The priest having washed his hands goes to the

middle of the altar, and holding his hands joined upon it, bows his head and says secretly the prayer: *Suscipe, Sancta Trinitas*, "Receive, O Holy Trinity, this oblation which we make to Thee in memory of the passion, resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in honor of the Blessed Mary Ever Virgin, of Blessed John the Baptist, the holy Apostles, Peter and Paul, of these and of all Saints, that it may be available to their honor and our salvation, and may they vouchsafe to intercede for us in Heaven, whose memory we celebrate on earth, through the same Christ, our Lord. Amen."

The oblation is offered in memory of the passion, resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, because these three mysteries have been the accomplishment of the immolation and consummation of His sacrifice. We make the oblation of Jesus Christ at the altar the same as He is in Heaven, that is to say, immolated on the Cross, clarified or glorified and consummated in God by His resurrection, and presented to His Divine Majesty by His ascension, and as there was but one immolation of this victim on the Cross, one glorification, consummation and communion by His resurrection, and since these cannot be repeated the sacrifice of the Mass is on that account a sacrifice commemorative of the passion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, because the sacrifice of the Mass already supposes and comprehends them. It is commemorative of those parts which have been accom-

plished, but this does not prevent it from being a real sacrifice, since there is made to God a true oblation of a victim really present, who is not indeed immolated, clarified and consummated on our altar anew, but who has been already immolated and consummated, all the parts of which is represented in some manner by the Church in the sacrifice.

But is it not an insult to God to offer the sacrifice in honor of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints? Not at all, because the Saints are honored and glorified only by virtue of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and also because, far from offering the sacrifice to the Saints, the Saints themselves are offered in sacrifice to God with Jesus Christ, their head.

There can be nothing more honorable to the Saints than to be imitated to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and we can do nothing that would be more agreeable to them than to celebrate their memory in the sacrifice which is the cause of all their honor and glory. And in this the enemies of the Church wish to find a subject of scandal and say that it makes the Saints equal to God, and preferred them even to Jesus Christ, for they say that to offer the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that it may serve to honor the Saints, is to honor them more than Jesus Christ, since we make use of Jesus Christ to honor them, and this is certainly to make them equal or even preferable to God, since we address ourselves to God to honor the Saints.

This objection does look a little plausible, but it is

built on a false interpretation which is given to the terms, and falls of itself if we only consider that the Church is far from making use of God and Jesus Christ to honor the Saints; but in adoring God by the sacrifice, and by joining or uniting them with Jesus Christ, with whom they offer themselves in sacrifice to God, she honors the Saints. Let us explain these truths.

We have already proved that the Church offers sacrifice to God alone. Whatever honor we pay to the Saints, we can say with St. Augustine: We never give them temples or priests, or sacrifices, because these do not belong to the Saints, but to their God, who is our God also. The temples are dedicated to God under the name of a Saint, whose relics are preserved there as hosts immolated to God, their Lord. We do not offer Jesus Christ to the Blessed Trinity to honor the Saints; but after having said that we offer to God the sacrifice of Jesus Christ we do not continue to offer, but simply explain what the sacrifice contains and what we should consider therein, viz.: the mystery of Jesus Christ and the victories of the Saints; for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which we offer, is the sacrifice of the whole Church, of the head and His members, the universal sacrifice of all the Saints who are themselves sacrificed to God. In this sacrifice the martyrs are named by Him who offered the sacrifice according to their rank. The priest, however, does not offer the sacrifice to them although he sacrifices to their memory; he addresses

himself to God, because he is the priest of God and not their priest; the sacrifice is the whole and entire body of Jesus Christ, which is not offered to them, because they themselves are in the sacrifice. This union of the Saints in the sacrifice being well understood, why should we not have the intention of honoring the Saints in the sacrifice, since we there celebrate the honor which they had of being accepted as victims agreeable to God; an honor which they continually possess, since they offer themselves incessantly. The Church honors them in naming them at her holy altar in thanksgiving for and in eternal commemoration of the wonders God has worked in them. The honor of the Saints is not so much their honor as the honor of God who is wonderful in them, whose death is precious in His sight, who continually bless Him and chant that He is their glory, their salvation, their hope, from whom proceeds all their strength and the only one who raises them up.

Since the honor we pay to the Saints comes from the gifts they have received from God, and which does not end in them, it consequently does not lessen the honor we owe to God. We see in the great many prayers of the missal that to offer for the Saints or in honor of the Saints, is to celebrate the greatness and power of God in the graces which they have received by the sacrifice itself. We offer to the Lord, says the Church, in the precious death of Thy martyrs this sacrifice whence martyrdom takes its rise; because the martyrs have

drawn from the Eucharist that invincible strength which proved their triumph, so also the virgins have their honored strength from the heavenly bread, from the wheat of the elect and from the wine which is the germ of virginity. In a word, we offer the sacrifice to honor the victories of the Saints which are those of Jesus Christ, and consequently to honor Jesus Christ in his Saints and the Saints in Jesus Christ, whose members they have the honor of being. Thus, far from being able to say that we make use of God and Jesus Christ to honor the Saints as if they were their superiors (which would be a horrible impiety, which cannot be imputed to the Catholic Church except through gross ignorance and pure malice), we, on the contrary, address the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to God in order to honor God through Jesus Christ and through the Saints who are sacrificed with Him and who on account of their union in the sacrifice of the Savior have had the courage and honor to triumph over the world, the devil and the flesh, an honor which the Church will forever celebrate.

And lastly, when we mention the Saints at the table of the Lord, we have always principally in view that they pray for us, that they would obtain for us grace to walk in their footsteps; we wish to engage them to intercede for us in Heaven, through the commemoration which we make of them on earth. *Quorum memoriam agimus in terris*. And thus the words of this prayer clearly point out wherein consists the honor we

pay to the Saints. We must also remark that this prayer, as well as all the collects and prayers of the Mass, even in festivals of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints, end by the words, "Through Jesus Christ, our Lord," to show that it is from Jesus Christ alone that we expect the graces which we ask even through the intercession of the Saints, because it is only in Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ, our only Mediator, that they can be our intercessors.

The prayer, *Suscipe, Sancta Trinitas*, being ended, the priest kisses the altar which represents Jesus Christ, to salute Him, together with the people towards whom he is about to turn. He extends his hands and then joins them in order to invite those present by this gesture and by his words to meditation; and raising his voice a little, says: *Orate fratres*, Let us pray, brethren; he calls those present brethren, for that was the name given to one another by the Christians from the commencement of the Church. "You are all brethren," says Arnobe, "born of the same Father, Jesus Christ, and of the same mother, the Church." The priest does not add and you, my sisters, even though there were only women present at the Mass; he addresses himself to the principal sex of the assembly without excluding the other, because the Church looks upon all those who have been baptized as neither man nor woman; you are all one in Jesus Christ. St. Paul. The priest continues to pray secretly. Brethren, pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the Father Almighty.

We see by this new invitation to pray that the nearer the moment of the sacrifice approaches the greater should be our prayer and recollection. The priest proposes to enter into the holy of holies, as he takes leave of the people to whom he does not again turn until after the consummation of the sacrifice, during all which time he never turns towards the people, even when he says *Dominus vobiscum*, although this is a salutation which is always made to the people to whom he addresses himself; but at this time, occupied entirely with the great mystery which is to be performed, he remains always turned towards the altar, the same as if he was inclosed within the holy of holies, far removed from the people, and ends his secret prayers in a loud tone of voice, to exhort the people to keep their souls raised to God.

When he turned toward the people and said: *Orate Fratres*, it was as if he said, I am about to enter into solitude, there to offer my prayer alone and in silence, but you on your part pray also, ask God to accept the sacrifice which we offer together. The assistants answer: "May the Lord receive the sacrifice from thy hands to the praise and glory of His name to our benefit, and to that of all His Holy Church." *Suscipiat Dominus sacrificium*. May the Lord receive the sacrifice from thy hands. It is a priest established by God and the Church who should offer it. Although Jesus Christ has associated all Christians in his priesthood, that they may all be spiritual priests, that they may have

a right as members of the body of the Church and in virtue of their union with Jesus Christ, the High Priest, and with the minister who represents Him at the altar, to offer to God this great and august sacrifice of the death of His Son, nevertheless, the external and visible oblation can be made only by a priest who in virtue of his ordination has received the power to consecrate and offer in a visible manner the body and blood of Jesus Christ, under the form and appearance of bread and wine. *Ad laudem et gloriam nominis tui*, to the honor and glory of thy name. The glory of God is the principal end of the sacrifice which should always be offered in acknowledgment of His sovereign dominion over all creatures. *Ad utilitatem quoque nostrum*. The three other ends of sacrifice are to thank Him for His favors, to obtain pardon of sin and the graces which are necessary for us, and which are comprised in these words, for our utility. *Totiusque Ecclesiae suae sanctae*, and for that of the whole Church, for the sacrifice is for the whole Church. It was to the whole Church that Jesus Christ was given; it is the Church who offers Him to His Father; it is the Church that is offered with Jesus Christ; it is the Church who receives Him, and it is only as His members and ministers that we have a right either to offer or to share in the fruit of the sacrifice.

The priest says in a low voice the prayer which is called the Secret, and mostly all the prayers of the canon of the Mass, and this is done to honor the silence

of Jesus Christ in His passion, and also that the faithful may be more attentive to God, whilst the priest prays in a low tone of voice.

According to the most authentic opinion, and the one most according to tradition, founded in the usage of all the Churches, and sanctioned by all the rites and ceremonies prescribed in all the liturgies and missals, this prayer is called the Secret, because it is said secretly in a low tone of voice. The Church enters into secrecy, says a learned author, and is no longer heard except by God.

The reasons of this silence are many and sublime; this custom preached from time immemorial in the Greek Church as well as in the Latin Church of reciting the secret prayer and those of the canon of the Mass in a low voice is full of mystery. The Church observes this custom to honor the secret prayer of Jesus Christ on the Mount of Olives, and His silence at the time of His passion; this silence is commanded in order to impress respect, and in order that the people may remain attentive to God, whilst the priest prays alone in the name of the whole congregation as was done at the sacrifice of the Jews, when the High Priest entered into the sanctuary to pray in the name of all the people.

There are also reasons for this silence which the Fathers and the councils of the Church have drawn from the mystery itself. Is there any mystery more sublime than the Eucharist? Are any prayers more

profound than those of the consecration? Who can fathom them? Even if the people saw and heard all that the priest does and prays in the great mystery, could they pierce the veil which God has drawn about His humanity? The Church thus thought that the obscurity and secrecy of the mysteries would be more efficacious in exciting their fear, their respect and admiration.

All that which is most grand and august in the sacrifice takes place in silence. The operation of the Holy Ghost, which changes the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, is not perceived by the senses; the Word is there, but He is silent. The sacred humanity is there, but it is always under the veil of bread and wine. The divine Savior takes a real body on the altar, He offers Himself, He prays, He sacrifices Himself, and still nothing is seen or heard by the faithful. Is there anything more reasonable than that during these holy mysteries the Church should express by a profound and religious silence the admiration she has for her God, who thus secretly works them.

Can we explain the ineffability of these mysteries better than by silence? No matter what care may be taken to instruct the people concerning the holy sacrifice of the Mass, there will always be a great many things beyond our comprehension, which the most skillful or learned can never explain, and which should be adored in silence. The councils have recommended

this; they forbid us to break this silence in order that each of the faithful prostrated to the earth, may revere in silence the mystery of the death of Jesus Christ, and thank Him for the infinite benefits it has procured for us. It is on this account that formerly the faithful were excluded from the inner place where the mysteries took place, on this account the gates of the sanctuary were closed, surrounded with rails and partitions, that the large curtains were drawn during the prayer of the consecration, which prevented the people from seeing or hearing anything. A profound silence reigned during the sacrifice which was broken only by the voice of the deacon, who, with a loud voice, cried out: "Holy things are only for the holy." It was then to inspire respect and admiration for the holy mysteries that the Secret and the prayers of the canon of the Mass are said in silence. But the Church does not intend by this that the faithful should not take part in this prayer which is proposed to ask Almighty God to receive favorably the gifts upon the altar and that by His grace He would enable us to be fit to be presented as hosts or victims agreeable in His sight, since the priest invites them at the *Orate Fratres*, which he does not say alone, but asks their consent by raising his voice at the end of the Secret and saying: *Per omnia secula seculorum*, which words are not the beginning of the Preface, but the ending of the Secret. By this exclamation, eager to engage the faithful to take part in the prayer

he is about to say, he breaks the silence and invites all the congregation to join with him and answer *Amen*. This response has always been made with great earnestness, and St. Jerome tells us that in his day it resounded from all parts like thunder. By this the faithful showed their consent to all that the priest asked God in secret, and they should be firmly convinced that they share in all the prayers that the priest says alone, and that he has offered to God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost world without end. *Amen*.

THE PREFACE AND SANCTUS

"The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor, thy ear hath heard the preparation of the heart."—Psalms 16:17.

THIS truth announced by the Royal prophet is found in many parts of the Sacred Scripture. God hears the simple preparation of the heart, that is to say, in order to obtain the graces we stand in need, God does not require either a long explanation of our evils, nor a touching enumeration of our miseries. The wise man also tells us that the efficacy of prayer does not consist in many words, and Christ Jesus Himself teaches us that when we wish to pray, the brevity of our speech is not less essential than recollection of mind. The Church, well grounded in this truth, whenever she prays for us is careful always to compress in the fewest words the requirements which are most important for our soul; but equally aware of the other truth, that God hears the simple preparation of the heart, never wishing us to enter upon His holy exercise without preparing for it. She does this especially in the formula of the Mass which is called the Preface, which, properly speaking, is not a prayer, but a new invitation to pray. She makes this preparation immediately before the canon of the Mass in

order that one may enter into this most interesting part of the sacrifice with the holiest dispositions.

The priest commences the Preface by saying: *Per Omnea Saecula Saecularum*, and adds, *Dominus vobiscum*, without turning toward the people; it would be useless for the priest to turn towards the people to say *Dominus vobiscum*, for instead of the people he would see only the curtains. The priest takes leave as it were of the people when he says: *Orate Fratres*, Pray, brethren, and considers himself as in the holy of holies into which the people were never allowed to enter. For this reason he does not turn from the altar and consequently teaches us that we should assume a respectful position expressive of the religious fear with which we should be animated. How great then is the sin of those who, instead of being attentive and keeping their eyes fixed upon the altar on which the Lord is about to appear, give way to distraction or turn their back to the altar. Their irreverence bears the character of those abominations which the Lord points out to the prophet Ezechiel, and the impieties of the Jews who, when in the temple, instead of praying turned their back to the altar and gave themselves up to worldly and profane thoughts. These profanations are much more sacrilegious on the part of Christians, because the Jewish temple was only a figure of our temple and the sacrifices which were offered therein were only weak figures of the grandeur and majesty of the sacrifice of the New Law.

The priest then continues the Preface by the *Dominus vobiscum*, which is a salutation and a desire, the meaning and origin of which we have already on a former occasion explained. The priest makes it here because a new effort to raise himself up to Heaven requires new strength and assistance from God. The priest and people wish this help to one another, the priest then raising his hands says: *Sursum corda*, "Lift up your hearts." Words which are quoted by all the Fathers of the Church who have spoken of the sacrifice. Words which are to be found in all Christian liturgies; an invitation ancient as the Church herself; words which come to us from Apostolic tradition founded on the example of Jesus Christ Himself, who before performing any of His many miracles, always raised His eyes and His heart to His Heavenly Father. This was what He did when He raised Lazarus from the dead, when He multiplied the loaves and fishes and when He changed the bread and wine into His body and blood. The Eucharist is a Secret, the sacrifice of the Mass a mystery, the body and blood of Jesus Christ are contained under a foreign substance, it contains Jesus Christ, truth Himself, but the hidden truth enveloped under signs. During our pilgrimage here below we cannot have nor can we possess Jesus Christ except under a veil. As we see these truths only with the eye of faith and as it were under a cloud, so also we do not possess His person except under a figure. In

the sacrament He conceals Himself from our sight and appears only to our faith. We should raise our hearts on high: *Sursum corda*; raise ourselves above sense and nature in order that we may conceive Jesus Christ under the species.

When we believe that Jesus Christ is present, though we do not see Him, we have already done a great deal, but we must go still higher and desire to see Him in His glory; *Sursum corda*, lift up your hearts. If His visible presence during His life on earth was so desirable and consoling, what will it be to see Him such as He is, to become like unto Him, as says St. John? We ask then that He would manifest Himself and that the sacraments would become a clear apparition of His glory. And this is the reason why at this august moment, we should renounce all thought, every idea of earth. When the priest says: *Sursum corda*, lift up your hearts, it is as if he said: At this moment banish all cares of this life; let your mind be applied to the great miracle which is about to take place, be occupied with God alone and close your heart against everyone but the Lord. If these are our dispositions with what truth and with what joy may we not say: *Habemus ad Dominum* We have them lifted up to God. A declaration which marks the necessity of uniting all our attention, all the desires of our heart and everything that can raise us up to God in order that we may offer the sacrifice worthily. But do we speak the truth when we make this answer?

Should we not rather say what Anastase, the Sinaita, said in the sixth century: What dost thou and what dost thou wish? Thy soul is occupied only with temporal and corruptible things and you answer: I have lifted it up to the Lord.

When the priest says: *Gratias agamus Domino, Deo nostro*, which means let us give thanks to the Lord, our God, he joins his hands and raises his eyes to Heaven, to express as far as possible by this gesture his desire to give thanks to God, and the people answer correctly: *Dignum et justum est*, it is meet and just. It is both meet and just to praise Him who merits praise, because God, by reason of His divinity, requires all praise and thanksgiving. It is then both meet and just for a reasonable mind to praise and thank Him.

The priest, extending his hands, continues. It is truly meet, just, right and salutary that we should always and in all places give thanks to Thee, O Holy Lord, Father Almighty, eternal God, through Christ, our Lord, through whom the angels praise Thy Majesty, the dominations adore, the powers do hold in awe, the heavens and the virtues of the heavens and the Blessed Seraphims do celebrate with united joy. In union with whom we beseech Thee that Thou wouldst command our voices also to be admitted with suppliant confession, saying: Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth. Heaven and earth are full of Thy Glory. Hosanna in the highest; Blessed is he that

cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest. This is the common Preface which is said every day. There are different ones for the principal solemnities of the year, in which in a few words the character of the festival is noted, to enter into the thanksgiving we should make to God.

Vere dignum et justum est æquum et salutare. It is truly meet and just, right and salutary. The priest approves and ratifies what the people say, that it is meet and just to thank God; he goes farther than the people and adds that it is right and salutary that we should always and in all places give thanks to the Holy Lord, Thou in whom all things are holy, Thou who art the source of sanctity. Father Omnipotent. Eternal God. Thou who are the true God, who had no beginning and will have no end. Through Christ, our Lord. How could we praise Thee worthily if our praise and thanksgiving did not derive their merit from our Head, our Mediator, who Himself thanks Thee, through whom the angels praise Thy Majesty, because it is by Him they have been created, it is from Him as from their head they derive all their sanctity, all the glory which they enjoy. All the heavenly spirits constantly adore Thy Divine Majesty; the dominations those blessed spirits who are above the other angels, the powers who make the very devils tremble, tremble 'themselves, not through fear but through profound respect. The heavens and the virtues of the heavens and all the blessed Seraphim, that

is to say, all the blessed spirits. The Sacred Scripture distinguishes nine choirs of angels, and the Church, without naming them in particular, comprises them all when she says the heavens, that is to say all who dwell in Heaven, as we would say the world, to express the inhabitants of the world. The virtues of the heavens, those among the angels who perform the greatest wonders, and the Seraphim, those who by their love excel all the other Saints. *Socia exultatione concelebrant.* All the holy Saints join in praising and adoring God. *Cum quibus*, etc., with whom we pray Thee to ordain that our voices may join, we ask for nothing more advantageous than to be united with the holy angels to praise God with them; but as there is no agreement between those spirits, so pure, and unfortunate sinners, no proportion between the constant praise of the angels who suffer no distractions, and our feeble prayers so lukewarm, so often broken off, we ask that by the order and grace of God we may be admitted to their society. *Supplici confessione dicentes*, by humbly repeating with them. This union with the angels so glorious does not prevent us from exercising humility as supplicants and acknowledging that we are unworthy of praising God and singing the canticles which follow; for God rejects the praise of the sinner, and Jesus Christ silenced the demon who said to Him: "Thou art the Holy one of God." (Luke 4:34.)

After the Preface the priest joins his hands and

bowing reverently says: Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of Armies. Blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the Highest. Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. This hymn is to be found in all the ancient liturgies; the people should sing it with the priest (as is done on Sunday by the choir); from St. Chrysostome we learn that the custom was general when he says: How can Christians utter words and sing profane songs with the same lips that have chanted Holy, Holy, Holy? At the *Sanctus* the bell is rung to warn those present that the priest is about to commence the solemn prayer of the canon during which the consecration of the body of Jesus Christ takes place, and to excite them to redouble their attention when the canticle of the angels commenced. This hymn has been borrowed by the Church from Heaven. Isaias ravished in spirit heard it chanted alternately by the Seraphims. St. John in his Apocalypse tells us that it is incessantly repeated by millions of angels who surround the throne, and who never cease to say: Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God of Armies, that is to say, the Lord, the Master of all those millions of angels, the Lord of all that is powerful and great in Heaven and earth; the Lord, the Sovereign Arbiter of all the works of the universe. Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Sabaoth. This canticle, according to the Fathers, is addressed to the Trinity, because the blessed spirits say once Lord and once God, but they say Holy three

times, no more, no less, by which they teach us that the three persons of the Trinity are equally honored and equal in glory and in nature.

What we adore in God by this canticle is, His holiness. This is the most pleasing to God; He is often called the Holy One of Israel; He manifests Himself as the most holy, the thrice holy. This is the only sound that is heard in Heaven. The Son of God Himself speaking to His Father, as if to comprise all His perfections in one word, calls Him Holy Father. He Himself is known as the Holy One. For, said the angel to Mary, "The Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." (Luc. 1:35.) And the prophet Daniel called Him the Holy of Holies.

The priest before saying the Blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest, raises himself, and makes the sign of the Cross. He raises himself because the benediction is an exclamation of joy which is said standing erect, whilst the *Sanctus* is a kind of adoration which should be made in an humble posture. He makes the sign of the Cross whilst saying, Blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord, because it is through the Cross that we share in the blessings and graces which have been conferred upon the earth.

We should then bless the Lord and praise Him for what He has done for us, bless Him because He is about to actually come upon our altar, to give us every

help, and to enable us to praise the majesty of God in a worthy manner. Let us then go to Him in spirit and say: Hosanna in the highest. Divine Messiah, Thou who wast sent from the highest heavens, save us, it is in Thy name alone that we can find salvation; say to our souls that Thou art our Savior and they shall be saved.

COMMENCEMENT OF THE CANON OF THE MASS

“ From the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the gentiles, and in every place there is a sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean offering, for my name is great among the gentiles, saith the Lord of hosts.”—Malachias I: II.

The name of the Lord is great, and on this account the offering made to Him should be clean, those who offer it should be irreproachable, and those who share it should be exempt from every affection to sin; and the manner of offering it should always be uniform. The name of the Lord is terrible, or as the prophet Malachias expresses it in the same chapter from which the words of my text were quoted, capable of inspiring a holy fear, and He requires from those who honor Him a sincere humility, profound recollection and infinite respect.

The name of God is holy and on this account those who wish to honor Him worthily, should join to their exterior homage the interior sentiments of adoration and love, with a spirit of self-denial and sacrifice. The Church endeavors to infuse these sentiments in our minds during that part of the Mass which we will endeavor to explain, viz.: The canon of the Mass. As this part of the Mass comprises all that is most

august in the oblation, we should endeavor to understand its import and meaning.

The word canon is taken from the Greek and means "*rule.*" Thus the canon of the Mass is a fixed rule, the unchangeable order of the Mass, the rule of the words of the consecration and all that precedes and follows it. This prayer is called the canonical *prayer* or simply *the prayer*, because in it we ask for the greatest of all gifts, which is Jesus Christ, our Lord.

According to the Council of Trent, the prayers of the canon are taken from the words of Jesus Christ, the traditions of the Apostles and from the institutions of the Popes and Bishops. Some of the ancients have placed the book which contains the prayers of the canon among the sacred books of the New Testament.

This prayer was never written in the first ages of the Church; the bishops and priests were obliged to learn it by heart. It was counted among the number of mysteries that were kept secret, and never confided to paper, says Origen. We have already seen that whilst the priest recited the canon the gates of the sanctuary were closed and that a silence which inspired respect and fear reigned throughout the temple.

In later years the Church has placed the canon of the Mass in the hands of the faithful. This favor, though denied to the Christians, was granted in our time for good and wise reasons and should not lessen

the respect with which we ought to be penetrated whilst reading it.

At the commencement of the canon the priest raises his hands and his eyes towards Heaven because he is about to address the Heavenly Father, then humbly lowering his eyes, joins his hands and bows in order to assume the posture of a suppliant which corresponds with the word *Supplices*: He then kisses the altar for the nearer the moment approaches when the altar will become the place of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, the greater is his love and respect. He then makes the sign of the Cross over the host and the chalice, whilst saying the words: *Benedicas haec dona*, that is, that Thou wouldst deign to bless these gifts, these presents, for we ask and obtain blessings only through the Cross of Jesus Christ, and he makes the sign of the Cross three times, in order to bless the offerings as gifts, as presents and as a sacrifice, and he then continues the prayer with hands extended. The prayer commences with the words: *Te igitur*, and may be translated, "We pray Thee with profound humility, most Merciful Father, and we ask Thee through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, to accept and bless these gifts, these presents, these holy and unspotted sacrifices which we offer Thee for the Holy Catholic Church, to which vouchsafe to grant peace as also to protect, unite and govern it throughout the world, together with Thy servant, our pope, or prelate, and all those of the orthodox

faith, and who hold the Catholic and Apostolic faith.” *Te igitur clementissime Pater.* The priest addresses the Heavenly Father as did Jesus Christ and calls Him most Merciful Father, because by an infinite goodness and mercy He loved us even so far as to give us His only Son. *Per Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum.* We should never ask anything from God except through Jesus Christ, our Mediator, and it is only through Him that we can obtain the grace necessary to offer Him in sacrifice. *Supplices rogamus ac petimus.* We most humbly pray and ask Thee, when we have no right to exact that which we desire we simply pray; and when we have a right, we ask, we beseech. Mankind has no right to obtain from God what they desire; that is to say, of themselves, they can hope for nothing except through grace and mercy, and it behooves them to express their wish in the most humble prayer. *Supplices rogamus*, as supplicants we pray. But the priest, who in this respect is deputed by Christ and the Church to offer sacrifice, and to whom Jesus Christ has said, “Do this for a commemoration of me,” has a right to ask, because he acts in the name of Jesus Christ, and for this reason says we beseech Thee that thou wouldst accept and bless these gifts, these presents and this sacrifice. It is the duty of the priest to offer the gifts, but God alone can bless them. There is a distinction between gifts and presents. When anything is given by a superior to an inferior, by the

Creator to the creature, it is called a gift, and when given by an inferior to a superior, the creature to the Creator, it is called a present. The bread and wine which are on the altar are called gifts with respect to God, from whom we receive all good gifts, and they are called presents with regard to man, who offers them to God. We can only offer to God His own gifts. "All things belong to Thee, O God," said David, "and we offer Thee that which we have received from Thy hands." *Haec sunt sacrificia illibata*. These holy and stainless sacrifices. 1. Because they are selected and separated from every other use to be consecrated to God: 2. Because we look upon these gifts as about to become the body of Jesus Christ, who is the only holy and unspotted host. *In primis quae tibi offerimus pro Ecclesia tua sancta Catholica*. We offer the sacrifice for the whole Church of God. *Ecclesia tua*, Thy Church. For that holy Church through Jesus Christ, who washed it in His blood, for that Church spread throughout the world, the universal, the Catholic Church—*quam pacificare, custodire adunare et regere digneris toto orbe terrarum*. That Thou wouldst deign to grant it peace, to protect, unite and govern it throughout the world. We ask four very important things for the Church: 1. That God would give her peace against her external persecutors, that she would not suffer from the assaults of her enemies; that He would put an end to the conspiracy of hatred and fury which

hell and impiety incessantly stir up against her; that He would deliver her from the wars whence originate all trouble and disorder; that He would support her against the raillery of the world, against libertinism and contempt, against the scandals which dishonor her, against the sins of her own children, who afflict her. 2. We ask of God that He would guard the Church, that He would sustain her against those who attack the foundations of her faith and that the gates of hell would never prevail against her. We do not mean by this prayer that the doctrine, the worship or the ministry of the Church can be destroyed, for they will last forever according to the promise of Jesus Christ, as we saw when treating of the Apostles' Creed. But as Jesus Christ foretold that scandals would arise in the Church, that there would be troublesome and disastrous times for the Church, that there would be trials by which even the elect would be seduced if such a thing were possible, severe conflicts against which Christ Jesus thought proper to assure us by promising that the gates of hell would never prevail against her, these terrible predictions and their still more frightful execution should increase our zeal for the Church, and cause us to beseech God that He would guard and concede it peace and concord, security and protection from enemies. What does not the history of the past unfold? Schism has destroyed the Church in Asia, and Hippo in Africa, once the See of the great and illustrious Augustine, is

no more. What ravages are there not to be seen in Europe? Which one of us can say that the Kingdom of God will not be taken from Him and be transferred to others who would bring forth fruit in abundance? Let us not deceive ourselves. This misfortune cannot happen to the Church, but not one of all the members of the Church can say that will never happen in his or her case. Ask we proof of this?

The third grace which we ask of God for the Church is that unity among its members, *adunare digneris*, that He would preserve them from schism. Here we pray indirectly for heretics and schismatics. The Church prays publicly for them only on Good Friday; and lastly we ask God that He Himself would guide the Church; that he would give to the Church good pastors. The most terrible of God's judgments and the surest sign of His wrath against a people is when he allows a bad priest to have charge over them. For it is principally with respect to pastors that God permits bad ones in punishment of the sins of the people. *Qui requare facit hominem hypocritum propter peccata populi*. "Who maketh a man that is a hypocrite to reign for sins of the people," as says Job, 27.

Together with our pope, Thy servant, Una cum famulo tuo, Papa nostro, St. Paul recommends us to pray for our pastors—"Remember your prelates." We name in particular and in the first place the Bishop of Rome, called in honor and distinction the holy

father our pope, that is our father. It is quite proper that in praying for the unity of the Church we pray for him who is the center of the communion, who presides over the Church, and with whom every other Church should agree. In order to possess the character of a child of the Church and to be in communion with the Church each one should be able to say: "I am bound in communion with the chair of Peter. I know that the Church is built on Peter." "Whoever eats the lamb outside of this house is profaned." We must not be surprised that the custom of praying for the pope by name has been observed in all the Churches. The Greeks up to the time of the schism observed it the same as the Latins. They always named the pope before their patriarch, and considered it as a grievous crime when in the division the name of the pope was removed from the dyptics, that is the catalogue of Bishops and Saints of the Church. The name of Dioscorus, the patriarch of Alexandria, has always been held in execration in the Church because he was the first to remove the name St. Leo from the dyptics of the Church. *Et Antistite nostro.* And our prelate. After the pope we name the bishop of the diocese in which we are, for as the successor of St. Peter is the center of unity for all the Churches of the world, the bishop is the center of unity for all his flock who with him form a one Church. And for all orthodox believers and professors of the Catholic and Apostolic faith. After praying for the unity of the Church it

is eminently proper to pray in general for those who preserve themselves in the purity of the faith. *Atque*, and for all those who labor for the preservation and propagation of the faith which the Apostles taught and spread throughout the world.

Mark well this expression, *cultoribus*, for all the believers and professors of the faith. This does not mean simply those who make profession of the faith; it means something more than that; it supposes a life which corresponds with the faith, for the profession of faith does not consist in simply believing what we are bound to believe, but in the zeal we should have for the truths taught by faith. Faith without works is of no avail; our faith should be active, a faith which is the very soul of charity, which will merit for us to constitute with Jesus Christ, one and the same host in His sacrifice, and to be united with Him in Heaven to offer to God the Father the sacrifice of eternal praise.

CONTINUATION OF THE CANON TO THE CONSECRATION

“And I will protect the city, and I will save it for my own sake, and for David my servant’s sake.”—4 Kings, 19:34.

THE prophet David applies these words to the external works of omnipotence. It is quite certain that nothing was made except by the word of God, that this word gave to created beings their measure, their propriety. He spoke far different, however, with regard to man, who can never do anything without labor, who can never produce anything without an effort. God wills, and creatures spiritual and corporal obey His voice without resistance or delay. It is the same God who will speak at the moment of consecration and whose word will produce effects infinitely more wonderful than the world and the miraculous things contained therein. Up to the present in the Mass, the priest in the name of the Church and as her deputy invoked the omnipotence of God over the bread and wine and prays that they might become through that omnipotence the real body and the real blood of Jesus Christ, His beloved Son. This consecration commenced is about to be consummated by the word of Jesus Christ Himself. The priest having fulfilled the functions of minister of the Church, is now about to exercise that of the minister of Jesus Christ; he no

longer speaks in his own name, but pronounces the words of Jesus Christ, and consequently it is Jesus Christ who consecrates through his lips. These sacred words demand on our part the most profound recollection and religious awe.

The priest before the consecration wipes the thumb and forefinger of each hand on the corporal in order that they may be fitted to reverently touch the body of Jesus Christ. This action corresponds with the sense of the words, and he imitates as far as possible what Jesus Christ did when instituting the Eucharist; and what He recommended to be done when He said to His Apostles: Do this, *hoc facite*; he then takes the bread, saying at the same time, *accepit*, etc., he raises his eyes whilst saying: *Elevatis oculis*, having raised his eyes and bows his head whilst saying, *gratis agens*, giving thanks, and in the person of Jesus Christ pronounced: "This is my body." This requires a full and detailed explanation.

Qui pridie quam pateretur, accepit panem in sanctus ac venerabiles manus suas. Who the day before He suffered took bread in His holy and venerable hands. How many reflections do not these few words furnish, who the day before He suffered. On the eve of His passion Jesus Christ instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist, the night before His death, the very night on which Judas plotted the infernal design of delivering Him into the hands of the Jews. Why did He not institute it after His glorious resurrec-

tion? He wished in this mystery to give us a memorial of His death, to transport us to Calvary, where His blood was shed. In order that all things might correspond with His views, He wished to institute this mystery on the very night on which He was betrayed, so that we might never forget the circumstances connected with the occasion on which He gave us such substantial proof of His love and tenderness. Transport ourselves in spirit to that same night, and try to penetrate the frightful preparations for the bloody sacrifice of our Lord on this night. Mark well this circumstance.

The Eucharist is a memorial of His death, should it not then precede it? No, man whose knowledge is limited, and whose foresight is fallible and uncertain, must always permit things to transpire before he can command them to be remembered; Jesus Christ, who knew well what was to happen and what kind of death He was to suffer, foretold His death beforehand: "This is my body, this is my blood." My body given, my blood shed, remember it. Remember my love, my sacrifice and the manner in which your deliverance was accomplished.

Moreover, Jesus Christ, when instituting the Eucharist as a memorial of His death, accomplished one of the most formal and expressive figures of His sacrifice, that the slaying of the paschal Lamb should be accomplished in its most essential circumstances. Now, one of the most essential circumstances was the

slaying of the paschal Lamb before the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. Although it should be a memorial of it, God so established it that the people when performing the Passover should not only remember their deliverance, but also that sacred memorial had been established the night before this great work, and whilst the people were in expectation of this great event.

This new Passover was instituted with the same view, and every time we celebrate it we will remember it as the mystery which Jesus Christ instituted the night before His death, to leave us a memorial of His death and to perpetuate it in some manner among us. In this circumstance Jesus Christ shows His omnipotence and love for us, and this is what the Apostle St. John, without repeating what the three other Evangelists had written concerning the institution of the Eucharist, tells us, that before He died, Jesus Christ, knowing that His hour had come when He should pass from this world to His Father; as He loved His own who were in the world He loved them to the end, and knowing that He came from God and that He should return to God. These expressions certainly prepare us for the change of bread and wine into His body and blood, and what meaning can they have in the mouth of those who, after these expressions of love and omnipotence on the part of Jesus Christ, would add: "And He gave to each of them a piece of bread." But how sublime are these words

on the lips of the faithful, who say, with St. John, that Jesus, knowing His hour had come, and that He would no longer be with His own He always loved most tenderly, He wished to leave them His own body as the most precious proof of His love, which would help them to pass from this world to Heaven.

In order to leave us His body He took bread. He wished to establish a sacrament for the spiritual nourishment of the faithful, and to unite them among themselves with God, and it was with this intention that He took bread and wine, which are the most ordinary nourishment and natural symbol of many bodies, united in one. He took the bread in His holy and venerable hands, to prove to us that the change of the bread is made in those same hands that worked so many miracles—those hands that gave sight to the blind, cured the sick, healed the lame, and multiplied the loaves of bread. . . . *Ad Deum Patrem Suum Omnipotentem*—To Thee, O God, His Father omnipotent. The omnipotence of the Father and of Jesus Christ should here appear in a remarkable manner. *Tibi gratiam agens benedixit*—Giving thanks to Thee, He blessed it. The evangelists do not speak of the thanksgiving of Jesus Christ except in connection with some great miracle; and He blessed, that is to say that, by His prayer to His Father, and by His own power which He received from the Father, He did for the bread all that was necessary to change it into His body. *Fregit*—And

He broke it. The bread among the Hebrews was so then that it was always broken with the fingers when distributing it, without using a knife. Deditque discipulis suis dicens—And He gave it to His disciples, saying: “Take ye and eat.” The Eucharist is instituted as a sacrament for our nourishment, and as a sacrifice in which we must share. We must eat of it: Ex hoc omnes—Eat all ye of this. These words, although not found in the Gospel, have been preserved by tradition and are important to show that all the priests who offer the sacrifice should necessarily partake of communion.

Take and eat ye all of this. What is meant by this? What does the word “this” here used signify? Is it the bread which He holds in His hands, and which remained *bread*? No, it is His own body, for His words were, “This is my body.” Here we see the omnipotent word who makes of the bread the flesh of the Savior, and His blood of the wine. All that is uttered by this word is done at the same instant that it is uttered. It is this same word that made Heaven and earth and all things contained therein. This word, pronounced originally by the Son of God, has made this of the bread, His body, and His blood of the wine; but He said to His Apostles: “Do this,” and His Apostles have taught us that it will be done up to the consummation of ages.

And this same word, repeated by the ministers of Jesus Christ, will eternally have the same effect. The

bread and wine are changed; the body and blood of Jesus Christ take their place. The body which was given up for us, and the blood which was shed for us are upon the altar. This we may consider marvelous; there is nothing wonderful in it for Jesus Christ, accustomed, as He is, to do all things by His word alone. He says: "This is my body; it is no longer bread." It is what He said—His body. "This is my blood; it is no longer wine." It is what the Savior said—His blood.

By virtue of this word, nothing remains but the body and the blood; if they are united it is because they are inseparable since the resurrection of Jesus Christ, for since that time He can die no more; but in order to imprint on this Jesus, who can die no more, the character of that death which He suffered, the word placed the body in one place, the blood in another, and each under different species. Behold Him, clothed in the character of His death, this Jesus formerly our victim by the effusion of His blood, and still ours to-day in a new manner, by the mystic separation of the body from the blood.

But how can this change take place? Can a human body be confined in so small a piece? If the Word will it, who can doubt it? The Word is omnipotent: "He spoke and all things were made." But I see nothing new upon the altar. I believe it truly. Jesus Christ, whenever He wished, made Himself invisible to men; He passed among them without

being seen; He came and went, and no one saw Him either enter or depart; He appeared and disappeared at will. But I see just what I saw before, and if I believe my senses there is nothing but bread and wine on this mystic table. Is the bread there? Is the wine there? No, everything is consumed; an invisible fire came down from Heaven; the Word descended upon the altar; everything yielded to Him; nothing remains but what He said. But I see the same exterior—yes, because the Word left nothing but what was necessary to point out to us where He should take the body from. The Word wished that the body of Jesus Christ should appear to us under the species of bread, because it was necessary to have something to show us where He took the body from. What He wished He accomplished. The Word consumed all the substance and left only the sacred envelope of the body and blood.

This is the sign which Jesus Christ left us, a sign by which we acknowledge that He is truly present, for the Word said so. We have no reason to be troubled about the manner in which He executed what He pronounced, for He can do all that which He who sent Him wished Him to do. "He sent the word and healed them and delivered them from their destruction." (Psalms 106:20.) Again He said: "This is my body." If He wished to leave us simply a sign He would have said, "This is a sign of my body." If He wished that His body should be with

the bread He would have said, "My body is here"; He did not say "My body is here," but "This is my body." Here, then, is our sacrifice: that pure oblation that should be offered up from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, and in every nation. How simple is the Christian sacrifice! Some bread upon the altar, a little wine in the chalice—nothing more is required for the most holy, the most august sacrifice that can be conceived. In the simplicity of the sacrifice we recognize the simplicity of Jesus Christ. What do we see in Christ? A man. What do we believe Him to be? God. So, also, what do we see in His sacrifice? Bread and wine. What do we believe them to be? The body and blood of Jesus Christ. After the priest has pronounced these words: "This is My body," he adores the sacred host he holds in his hands, and bends his knee to the ground; he then rises up and raises the host on high; he exposes it with reverence to the people, to be by them adored, and at the same time to represent the raising up of Jesus Christ on the Cross; he then replaces it on the corporal and genuflects again; at the same time the faithful are warned by the sound of the bell to prostrate themselves in the presence of Jesus Christ.

After the consecration of the host the priest consecrates the chalice, saying: "In like manner, after He had supped, taking also this excellent chalice into His holy and venerable hands, and then giving thanks,

He blessed and gave to His disciples, saying: 'Take and drink ye all of this, for this is the chalice of my blood of the new and eternal testament, the mystery of faith which shall be shed for you, and for many to the remission of sins. As often as you do these things you shall do them in remembrance of me.' "

After the supper, that is, after eating of the Paschal Lamb, Christ took into His venerable hands this excellent chalice, predicted by the Prophet David. This excellent chalice, which shall no longer contain the shadows and figures of the Law, but the precious blood which they signify; and, giving thanks, He blessed it, that is to say, He blessed what it contained, and changed the wine into blood, and, giving it to His disciples, He said: "Drink ye all of this, for it is the chalice of my blood, of the new and eternal testament." St. Luke distinctly points out two chalices—the one used at the commencement of the legal supper, and which was not consecrated, and the other at the end of the repast, which, according to Jewish rite, is called the chalice of thanksgiving, and it is this chalice which became the true chalice, the true Eucharist chalice, since the precious blood of Jesus Christ, which it contained, and which we offer in sacrifice with His body, is the most excellent gift we can offer in thanksgiving to God.

"This is the chalice of my blood, the blood of the new and eternal alliance." What is the meaning of this expression, the blood of the alliance? Formerly,

in ancient time, when alliances were contracted, they were confirmed, sealed, and ratified by the blood of the victim slain, and which was sprinkled on the contracting parties. Thus, the alliance which was formed on Mount Sinai between God and man, through the ministry of Moses, was sealed and consecrated by the blood of victims, and Moses sprinkled the blood over all the people and over the book of the law. This alliance was only figurative. Jesus Christ announced, prefigured by Moses, is come to make a new alliance and to confirm it here, not by the blood of animals, but by His own blood. He made the alliance after fulfilling all the figures, in eating the Paschal Lamb; He made it at a feast, when alliances were ordinarily made; He made it when making His dying will and testament. There is in this word testament a something peculiarly touching for us. Here is a will, in which Jesus Christ assures an inheritance, wills us the remission of sins, but, in order that we might come into possession of that which He wills us, He must die. This, even, is not all. The will of Jesus Christ should be confirmed and written in His blood, and the act which is written is the Eucharist. This is the meaning of the words of St. Paul, who said not this is my blood of the new testament, but "This chalice is the new testament in my blood." (1 Cor. 11:25.) This testament is the mystery of faith. Although these words are not found in the Gospel, they have been left to the Church by tradition. The grandest

of all mysteries, and, so to speak, the secret of faith, the secret of religion, is that the blood of Jesus Christ should be shed for the salvation of the world; as this blood contained in the chalice is by excellence the mystery of faith, which shall be shed for you and for many in the remission of sin. The Savior tells us that He will shed His blood, first, for the Apostles, the heads of His Church, *pro vobis*; second, for all those who believe and are converted by their preaching, *et pro multis*, and although He truly died for all mankind, He died especially for the faithful. As often as you do these things, Jesus Christ has given power to the priests to do what He did: *hoc facite*. He gave them unlimited power; they can exercise it as often as convenient. In commemoration of me. The priests should perform this great action in commemoration of the divine Savior, that is to say, to announce His death until He comes, to renew the memory of that love which made Him give His life for man, and, lastly, to solemnize the divine mystery contained in the Eucharist.

After the consecration of the chalice the priest adores the precious blood by making a genuflection; he then rises and elevates the chalice, that it may be seen and adored by the people, then reverently replaces it on the corporal, covers it with the plate, and adores it again by genuflecting. The chalice is raised for the same reason as that of the host, in order that Jesus Christ may be adored in a simple manner from the moment that He becomes really present on the

altar by consecration. During the elevation the faithful should prostrate themselves in mind and heart before the Sacred Victim, who offers Himself for us upon the altar as He was offered on the Cross. But what should we do to adore Him? Our senses must give place to faith and see in Jesus Christ all the mystery of His divinity concealed from our sight. This faith is the source of spiritual and interior homage. Can there be a more profound mystery than our sacrifice? Exteriously, nothing strikes us; interiorly, everything is heavenly, all is divine. How, then, can we reverence that which we do not see if faith do not pierce the veil, and how can we persuade ourselves that we have not lost the faith if it does not correct our want of respect in the presence of the blessed sacrament? Purify, then, your hearts during these august mysteries. Strike your breast, shed tears, cast yourselves at the feet of the Savior, water them with your tears and leave them not until you have obtained mercy; implore your Savior to draw you to Himself, and let nothing separate you from Him in future. He is always the victim of salvation at the altar, as well as on the Cross, and the altar, like the Cross, is the throne of mercy for the sinner, the cause of our deliverance and entrance into Heaven. In the hour of danger and temptation, ask Jesus Christ, offered and slain for you, to assist and protect you, in order that you may triumph by the power of His sacrifice over sin and passion, and by this triumph gain for yourselves glory eternal.

THE CONSECRATION

“He spoke and all things were made.”—Psalms 32:9.

MERCY alone prompted God to save us. It was because He wished it, and not on account of any merit of ours, that He delivered himself up for our iniquities and made us sharers of His grace. He wished to attach the exercise of this mercy to the protection and intercession of the saints, and as He Himself is the principle of their merit, when we invoke them we can apply to God these words: “I will save you, but it will always be for my own sake, and to accomplish the eternal designs of my goodness towards you. I will save it for my own sake.” The prayers of my elect and my friends will be heard through the merciful precaution I will take in your regard, and, although mercy is eternal, free, and gratuitous on my part, you will owe it according to the order of my decrees, to the influence and application of my servants. “For David my servant’s sake.”

Here is the foundation of that communion of saints which the Church proposes to us as an article of faith, and at the same time a motive for that part of the

canon which is called the *Communicantes*, that is, the communicating which I will endeavor to explain. But, first, it will be necessary to say a few words concerning the particular and special prayers which the priest and those who assist at Mass recite at the altar for those whom they are bound by the ties of nature, friendship, and gratitude.

The prayer *Te igitur* being ended, the priest joins his hands and raises them slightly above his breast; the new grace which he asks from God calls for a new elevation of hands, which expresses his desire of being heard. For a while he is silent, and with head slightly inclined, in order to think more attentively of the persons he wishes to recommend to God; he then extends his hands and, keeping them elevated as before, continues the prayer *memento Domine*, etc.—that is, Be mindful, O Lord, of Thy servants, men and women, for all here present whose faith and devotion are known to Thee, for whom we offer or who offer up to Thee this sacrifice of praise for themselves, their families and friends, for the redemption of their souls, for the hope of their safety and salvation, and who pay their vows to Thee, eternal living and true God.

Memento Domine—Be mindful, O Lord. We know that everything is present to God, that is to say that He knows all things, and we know, also, that a remembrance on the part of God amounts to assistance—*famulorum famularumque*—of Thy servants,

men and women. After the prayer for the faithful in general, the Church leaves the priest free to pray for any person in particular. In former days the priest named publicly those for whom he wished to pray, especially those who made any offering for the sacrifice and the other wants of the Church. At present we name the benefactors only in silence; the priest thinks for a short while of those persons for whom he wishes or for whom he is bound to pray, especially those who (1) by their benefactions, their alms, have contributed to the celebration of the divine mystery, for the support of the ministers of the Church, and for the poor; (2) for those who desired to be remembered at the altar; (3) for those for whom he wishes to ask graces, whether spiritual or temporal, inasmuch as they may serve for the glory of God and the salvation of their soul. *Et omnium circumstantium*—and for all here present at the Mass or sacred mysteries, because their eagerness to be present at the Mass supposes a desire on their part to be remembered at the altar, and to participate in the graces and fruits of the divine sacrifice. . . . *Quorum tibi fides cognita est et nota devotio*—whose faith and devotion are known to Thee. The priest prays for all those present in whom God sees a true faith and a sincere devotion. The *memento* does not include those who are present only bodily, those who assist at Mass, merely through custom, much less those who assist without attention and devotion, without piety, but with a dissipated mind, a

mind willfully distracted; with a heart filled with and agitated by passion; violently attached to sin and crime, without any love of God, without any sorrow for past sin, without repentance or even the desire of repentance. The essential dispositions are faith and devotion; a lively faith which unites the mind with the great mystery which is about to take place at the altar, a faith which fills the mind with a respectful fear and profound recollection. A sentiment of piety and devotion which warms the heart of love, penetrates it with gratitude, exhilarating in the ardent desire of profiting by the sacrifice. *Pro quibus offerimus vel qui tibi offerunt*—For those for whom we offer, or those who offer to Thee. This has reference to the benefactors and those present, for it is true to say that the priest offers the sacrifice for the faithful, and that the faithful offer it also, either by furnishing the matter of the sacrifice or by uniting themselves with the priest to spiritually offer, with him, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. *Hoc sacrificium laudis*, this sacrifice of praise. The bread and wine which the priest, on the part of the people, has already been called the unspotted host, because the Church has only in view what the bread and wine are to become by the consecration, namely, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, which are the true sacrifice of praise. *Pro se suisque omnibus*. The Church is not content with praying simply for the benefactors and those present—she enters into all their desires and indicates that they can

pray to God for themselves, and for all those who are bound to them by the ties of blood or friendship, *suisque omnibus* and for all theirs. Order requires that one should pray for it for himself, then for others, for charity begins at home, and the same order requires that we ask for the goods of the soul before those of the body, and for this reason we say *pro redemptione animarum suarum*, for the redemption of their souls, *pro spe salutis*, to obtain salvation for which they hope, *et incolumitatis suae*, and for the preservation of their health—these three kinds of favors come to us through Jesus Christ and by His sacrifice. *Tibique reddunt vota sua, aeterno Deo vivo et vero*, and who pay their vows to Thee, eternal living and true God.

The faithful who offer the sacrifice by the hands of the priest pay at the same time their vows to God, as the sole author of their life and goods; they offer their vows in offering themselves; for what are the first vows we owe to God? Ourselves, we have been devoted to Him by becoming His children in baptism, and we should devote ourselves constantly to Him by our adoration and love.

After the *Memento*, the priest, remaining in the same position, says the prayer *Communicantes*, that is, communicating with and honoring in the first place the memory of the glorious and ever Virgin Mary, Mother of our Lord and our God, as also of the blessed Apostles and Martyrs, Peter and Paul, Andrew,

James, John, Thomas, James, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Simon, and Thaddeus, Linus, Cletus, Clement, Xystus, Cornelius, Cyprian, Chrysogonus, John and Paul, Cosmas and Damian, and all the saints by whose merits and prayers grant that we may be always defended by the help of Thy protection, through the same Christ, our Lord, *Amen*. The priest joins his hands when saying the words "through the same Christ, our Lord," to redouble his fervor in naming Jesus Christ, our Mediator, by whom he hopes to be heard.

Communicantes, participating in the same communion. We show by these words that we enter into communion with all the members of the body of Jesus Christ in general, *et memoriam venerantes*, and honoring the memory in recalling the memory of the saints we add the manner in which we may enter into communion with them, so that they may pray for us, and that God may grant to their prayers and intercession the help of which we stand in need. This is an admirable policy on the part of the Church, who knows what God does in favor of the saints, and which we would not dare hope that He would do for us. The Scripture teaches us (4 Reg. 19) that God told King Ezechias, through the Prophet Isaias, that He would save Jerusalem in spite of the formidable army of the Assyrians, on account of David, His servant; and we know that the Israelites have often called God to their assistance by praying to Him to be mindful of Abra-

ham and Isaac and Jacob. The Church does the same in recalling the memory of the saints to render God favorable to our requests. In primis gloriosae semper virginis Mariae, genitricis Domini Nostri Jesu Christi. It is quite proper that the Mother of our Savior and our God should be placed at the head of all the saints. The Church very often makes mention of her in her prayers, and it is principally in the holy sacrifice that she should make remembrance of her, since the divine victim of our altar is flesh of her flesh. In all the Eastern Churches, commemoration has always been made of the Blessed Virgin Mary in a manner which marks the admiration of the faithful for her, on account of her prerogatives and her power with God, and in our liturgy she is placed above all creatures: First, gloriosae, by the great glory which God has made to shine forth in her; second, Semper virginus, the only one who was always a virgin, although she was truly a mother—Mother of God, because she is the Mother of Jesus Christ, who is God. Sed et beatorum apostolorum ac Martyrum, Petri et Pauli—As also of Your blessed Apostles Peter and Paul. We honor the memory of the twelve Apostles, because they are the pillars of the Church, the first who had the happiness of sharing in the holy sacrifice and the power of offering it in the commemoration of Jesus Christ; to them we join St. Paul, because Rome never separates Paul from Peter, although Paul was not an Apostle until after the death of Jesus

Christ; nevertheless he learned from Christ the institution of the holy sacrifice.

To the twelve Apostles we add twelve other martyrs, who, in the shedding of their blood, have proved themselves faithful followers of the Cross, all celebrated martyrs at Rome: Linus, Cletus, and Clement, who were cotemporaries and successors of St. Peter at Rome; Xystus and Cornelius were popes and martyrs; Cyprian, the first bishop of Carthage, celebrated for his learning and his great desire to die for Jesus Christ; St. Laurence, archdeacon of Rome, whose charity for the poor and the martyrs will always be honored by the faithful, Chrysogonus, an illustrious Roman who suffered martyrdom under Diocletian; John and Paul, brothers, born at Rome, who were put to death, under Julian the apostate, for having refused to offer sacrifice to idols; Cosmas and Damian, physicians and surgeons, who gave their services for charity and as a means of gaining souls to Jesus Christ, and, lastly, we make commemoration of all the saints in general by asking that it would be pleasing to God to make us feel His protection through their merits and prayers. We have already many times said that the saints pray only through Jesus Christ, and that they have no merit except through Jesus Christ, so it is always through the mediation of Jesus Christ that we have recourse, and this prayer, like all other prayers, ends through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord. *Amen.*

In the Old Law, those who offered sacrifice to God put their hands on the head of the victim before slaying it, wishing by this action to testify that they substituted this victim in their place, to suffer the death they merited, and at the same time they prayed that God would regard the sacrifice of their heart and look favorably on the offering they make of the victim about to be slain, and to grant them through it the remission of their sins or whatever else they thought proper to ask for. In imitation of this the priest, about to offer the mystic immolation of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, in the name of the people for whom and with whom he offers, holds his hands over the bread and wine, about to be changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ. By this ceremony he offers himself and the whole Church to God, through Jesus Christ, who is about to be mystically slain in order to obtain, through His mediation, peace in the present life: *Diesque nostros in tua pace disponas*. The grace of being preserved from the greatest of all evils, eternal damnation: *Atque ab aeterna damnatione nos eripi*, and, lastly, that He would vouchsafe to command that we be numbered among the elect: *Et in electorum tuorum grege numerari*. Happy they who every day make the request from God with the priest at Mass to be counted among the elect. *Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum, Amen*: through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who is soon to be really present on the altar for the sanctification of the faithful.

And now we come to the most important part of the sacrifice of the Mass, namely, the consecration—that is to say, the prayer which precedes words by which the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, by which He is made really present on the altar. Would it not be better for us to simply believe this and be silent to adore, in profound silence, all these words, rather than undertake to explain them? Mortal man can never understand them.

Yet it would be well for us to see what Jesus Christ commanded us to do. He wished us to do the same that He himself did when He instituted the sacrament: *Hoc facite*—Do this. What did He do? What did He say to make His body present? The Evangelists, as well as St. Paul, tell us that He prayed, that He blessed the bread and wine before He broke and gave it to His disciples, and as He commanded them to do what He did, the Church has always understood that we should bless the Eucharistic bread and say all that Jesus Christ said, and pronounce the same words that He pronounced.

The Evangelists do not tell us how Jesus Christ invoked the omnipotence of His Father and employed His own in blessing the bread to transubstantiate it into His body. We see only that by returning thanks and blessing it that He sanctified it. But the Church, knowing that we should do what Jesus Christ did, and say what we know He said, prescribes a certain

prayer for the priest, by which to envoke the omnipotence of God. Tradition teaches that this prayer is necessary for the consecration and should be added to the words of Jesus Christ. "Let us not be content with the words selected by the Apostle," says St. Basil, "for the consecration of the Eucharist, but let us add other words before and after, as having a force for the mysteries which we have learned only from the written law."

The Church does not attach as much virtue to the words she added to the consecration as she does to those of Jesus Christ. It is an article of faith that the substance of the bread and wine is changed at the moment the words of Jesus Christ are pronounced by the priest, but it is essential for the sacrament that the intention of the Church who offers it should be made known, and that her ministers should express what she wishes and desires.

From this we can see the importance of the prayer which I will endeavor to explain; it comes to us from Apostolic tradition and belongs in part to the consecration. To understand the full signification and extent of the prayer we should bear in mind that the Church has in view not only the oblation of bread and wine, which is to become the body and blood of Jesus Christ, but, likewise, the oblation of herself, that of the priest, and of those present at the Mass who are joined to the oblation of the souls in Heaven and on earth.

The priest commences this prayer with hands joined, and separates them only to make the sign of the Cross over the gifts to be offered, by which he announces beforehand the death of the Savior, of which the consecration is only a continuation; these blessings are accompanied by the words "*Quam oblationem,*" that is, which oblation Thou, O Lord, vouchsafe in all things to make blessed, approved, ratified, reasonable, and acceptable, that it may become for us the body and blood of Thy well-beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. "*Quam oblationem tu Deus, in omnibus, quaesumus benedictam.*" When Jesus Christ blessed the bread in instituting the Eucharist He changed it into His body; we ask that God, by His omnipotence, would impart His blessing to the bread and wine to change them into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and that thus the oblation upon the altar might become the divine victim, replete with every blessing celestial, and that they might be communicated to us, so that the oblation of ourselves might also be blessed by the infinite goodness of God. *Adscriptam*, that is, that the oblation upon the altar might be approved, that God would be pleased not to reject it, and that the oblation we make of ourselves might also be approved with that of Jesus Christ and the saints. *Ratam*, that the oblation on the altar might be ratified so as to be permanent and irrevocable, that is to say, that it might become that victim that will never change, neither like the ancient sacrifices of animals which have been

revoked, nor like all other bodies which may be destroyed, and which last only for a while; that our oblation may be permanent and irrevocable, in binding ourselves to God in such a manner that we may never have the misfortune of being separated from Him. . . . Rationabilem, reasonable. Before Christ, no one ever made such a request of God, because it was only irrational animals that were offered in sacrifice. We ask that the host upon our altar would become a human victim, and the only one endowed with reason. We ask at the same time for our oblation, that it might be endowed with reason and intelligence, and that we may become reasonable victims, perfectly submissive and obedient to God. . . . Acceptabilem que digneris. That it may be agreeable. That thus the oblation of our altar may become the only victim which, of itself, is worthy of being infinitely agreeable to God in becoming the body of His well-beloved Son; we ask, also, that our oblation may become, from day to day, more agreeable in the sight of God, our Sovereign Lord. Ut nobis corpus et sanguis fiat dilectissimi Filii tui Domini Nostri Jesu Christi, that it may become for us the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, lastly, the Church asks the great miracle of the change of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. How forcible is the expression here used: Ut fiat; it is equally simple, "That it may be done." This is the expression used in Scripture for creation, the prodigy of God's omnipotence: Fiat lux, let there be

light. It was also the expression used by the Virgin Mary to indicate the incarnation of the word, "Be it done unto me according to Thy word." The Church does not pretend to offer to God simply bread and wine. If she offers bread and wine it is that they may become the body and blood of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist as true and as real as that which took place in the chaste womb of the Virgin Mary at the moment of the conception and incarnation of the Son of God, and this is why the word fiat is used to point out a true and real action. And this is what is meant in the Greek liturgy when they pray to God, as we do, to make the bread and wine the body and blood of Jesus Christ they ask expressly that the bread may be made the very body of Jesus Christ and the wine His very blood.

We do not ask simply that the bread and wine may become the body and blood of Jesus Christ, but that it may become such for us: *Ut nobis fiat*, that is to say, in order to communicate to us the gifts which Jesus Christ merited for us by His sacrifice, the grace of a full pardon of our sins and all the help necessary for salvation. And as when it is said in *Isaias*: "A Son is born into us, a child is given to us," we understand that He is born and given for our salvation, so we ask that this oblation may become the body and blood of Jesus Christ for our sanctification in this life, and our consummation and eternal happiness in Heaven. *Amen.*

CONTINUATION OF THE CANON AFTER THE CONSECRATION

“Be mindful, O Lord, of the word spoken to thy servant, that word which strengthened my hope.”—Psalms 118:49.

THESE words of the prophet should give us an idea of the sentiments with which the words of the consecration should inspire our hearts and minds. They are truly the words of the Lord, since they were pronounced by Him to whom all power is given in Heaven and on earth and in hell. They were really addressed to His servants, since He commanded us to respect them after Him. They are words of hope and life, since the great mystery they effect had for its end to restore to life those who are dead in sin, and to awaken the confidence of those who, at the sight of their many crimes, might be drawn to despair. We may then say to our Lord: We have done as commanded by You, that which Thou commandest by assisting at the great sacrifice wherein the words You have taught us to produce their effect. May these words make upon them the most salutary impression in favor of Thy servants, and do not permit the confidence which they inspire to become fruitless. With these sentiments we pass from the elevation to the prayers which follow it.

After the consecration the priest holds his hands

extended whilst he recites the prayer "Unde et memores," that is, Wherefore, O Lord, we, Thy servants, as also Thy people, calling to mind the blessed passion of the same Christ Thy Son our Lord, His resurrection from hell, and glorious ascension into Heaven, offer unto Thy excellent Majesty of Thy gifts and grants, a pure host, a holy host, an immaculate host, the holy bread of eternal life, and the chalice of everlasting salvation. The priest makes the sign of the Cross when he says pure host, holy host, immaculate host; the signing of the Cross which follows the consecration should be distinguished from those which preceded. The sign of the Cross before consecration had for its end to implore grace from God, or as sign by which we expect grace through the Cross of Jesus Christ; but after the consecration, everything is blessed, we simply offer. We make the sign of the Cross on the gifts of the altar only to show that they are the real body of Jesus Christ. The Church omits no opportunity of impressing on the mind of the priest and those who assist at Mass that the sacrifice of the altar is the same as that of the Cross; she wishes to represent Jesus Christ immolated on the Cross. Now, in order to produce this effect she wishes that all the words which designate the body or the blood of Jesus Christ should be accompanied with the sign of the Cross, which shows that the host and that which is contained in the chalice are the same body that was crucified and the same blood that was shed on the

Cross. Thus, when we make this prayer we make the sign of the Cross five times; when saying a pure host we signify by that that it is the same pure host that was nailed to the Cross; the second, when saying a holy host, that it is the same holy host that was sacrificed on the Cross; the third, immaculate host, that it is the spotless host which was offered on the Cross; the fourth, a holy bread to signify that it is the holy bread of life, that is to say, the same who said "I am the true bread, who came down from Heaven and who died on the Cross to purchase life for us"; the fifth, the chalice of salvation, that the blood which is in the chalice is the same that was shed on the Cross. *Unde et memores.* The priest, having consecrated in the person and by the words of Jesus Christ, continues his prayer in addressing the Heavenly Father, as before the consecration; he represents to Him that it is order to obey the command of Jesus Christ Himself; that he and those present at the Mass are occupied in remembering what He suffered in His passion. *Nos servi tui*, we, Thy servants. The priests and the ministers at the altar are in an especial manner the servants of God, *Sed et plebs tua sancta*, as also of Thy holy people. The priests always speak of themselves in an humble manner and with respect for the assistants. They call them the holy people because they are called to sanctity, they are the holy nation, and because they are supposed to live as Christians. They are also supposed to be at this moment occupied with

the mysteries of Jesus Christ, tam beatae passionis, as also of Thy holy passion. We represent to ourselves the sorrows, the humiliation, and all the opprobrium that our Savior suffered. His passion is called most holy because it washes away the sins of the world; because it is the source of all good, and in freeing us from our sins it merits for us eternal life. We should be occupied with this mystery because the sacrifice of the altar is the passion of Jesus Christ and His resurrection from hell. The passion of Jesus Christ is expressed on the altar by the separation of His body and blood, which are consecrated separately; which shows that the Savior is present there under the signs of His death and the shedding of His blood. But this separation is only mystical; Jesus Christ is there truly living; His body and blood are really present under the species of bread and wine; so that we cannot celebrate this mystery without being reminded of His resurrection. "Jesus Christ, having arisen, dies no more," says St. Paul (Rom. 6: 5, 9); it is impossible, then, that in the sacrifice of the altar He could be deprived of life. By this word resurrection from hell we mean that Jesus Christ arose after He had been placed in the tomb, and after He had descended into Limbo, Sed et in coelos gloriosae ascensionis, and of His glorious ascension into Heaven. The ascension is the consequence of what was due to Jesus Christ arisen, and as a consummation of the sacrifice which He offered to His Father. It is in Heaven that He achieved

the sacrifice by offering Himself continually for us. Now the Eucharist contains all these mysteries because Jesus Christ offers truly then the same as He was offered on earth, and as He is offered in Heaven; we should then commemorate all these mysteries, since He is sacrificed on our altar by the consecration. *Offerimus praeclarae majestati tuae*, we offer to Thy most excellent Majesty, in view of these great mysteries, and to render thanks for all Thy gifts and favors, *de tuis donis ac datis*; the victim is worthy of these which we hold in our hands a gift which You were pleased to give Thyself; we could not present it to Thee if Thou didst not first give it to us. But what are these gifts and grants we offer Thee? They are no longer the gifts and presents which the Church offered at the commencement of the canon of the Mass; they are no longer the bread and wine; their substance has been changed. They have become the body and blood of Jesus Christ; this body and blood have been formed out of substance offered before, and which she received from God. The Greeks express this in two words in their Liturgy. After pronouncing the sacred words of Jesus Christ, they continue: We offer Thee the things which belong to Thee, made of things which belonged to Thee: *Tua ex tuis*, that is to say, the body and blood of Thy Son, formed out of bread and wine, which were Thy creatures. Words which express the nature of the oblation, wherein is offered to God a substance, that is to say, the body and

blood of Jesus Christ, formed of another substance, namely, that of bread and wine, and this is what we mean by the words we offer to Thee this holy host, made of things which we received from Thee.

It is by these gifts and grants that we offer a pure host, because it has been formed by the operation of the Holy Ghost, without ever being able to contract the least stain of original sin. *Hostiam sanctam*, a holy host, because it is united substantially with the Divinity. *Hostiam immaculatam*, since by this union it is incapable of being soiled by any actual sin. *Panem sanctam vitae aeternae et calicem salutis*, a victim which is the holy bread and the drink of eternal salvation given by God to make us a true life in this world and to enable us to arrive at the happy and eternal life when we depart hence. The real presence and transubstantiation could not be more clearly marked out than they are in this prayer, and as this prayer comes to us from most ancient times, since it has been recited in all times and in all churches, we must conclude that faith in real presence and transubstantiation was in all times and in all churches.

The priest, continuing the canon, recites the prayer: *Supra quae propitio*, that is, upon which vouchsafe to look with a propitious and serene countenance and to accept them as Thou wert graciously pleased to accept the gifts of Thy just servant Abel, and the sacrifice of our patriarch, Abraham, and that which Thy high priest, Melchisedech, offered to Thee a holy sacrifice,

an immaculate host. “*Supra quae propitio ac sereno vulta et respicere digneris.*” Upon which deign to look with a propitious and serene countenance. The gift upon the altar is the object of the complacency of the Eternal Father; but is offered by the hands of a sinful man, who may be displeasing to God, for God regards those who offer as well as the gifts which are offered. We implore God, in His goodness, not to separate us from the gift of the victim which we offer Him on the altar; that is to say, that as He is propitious to the victim who is infinitely pleasing to Him, He would be pleased in considering that victim to be propitious to those who have the honor of offering it to Him and to accept as He did the fruits of Thy just servant, Abel. By this prayer the Church asks God to be pleased to accept the gifts which the priests offer Him on the altar, as He was with the gifts of Abel, the sacrifice of Abraham, and the offering of Melchisedech. These holy men were pleasing to God, and holy dispositions with which they made their offerings to Him made their offerings agreeable in His sight. Happy the priest and the people who, by the holy dispositions of their heart, please God when they offer Him in sacrifice the victim who always pleased Him. But how can we make any comparison between the sacrifice of the Patriarchs and the sacrifice of the Church in which our Lord Jesus Christ is offered? This is a great mystery which needs to be developed. The doctrine of the Church is that Jesus Christ has

always been offered on earth; that there is but one religion; that there is but one only Savior in whom mankind have been reconciled with God; that the sacrifice of the Old Law was agreeable to God only inasmuch as it represented the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. So that the difference of the Old Law and the New consists in this, that in the Old Law, Jesus Christ was offered figuratively, and in the New Law He is offered in reality. There were a great many figures of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ which were very expressive, but in the canon the Church relates the sacrifice of Abel, of Abraham, and Melchisedech, which especially represent this sacrifice. Abel offering the first-born of his flocks expresses the sacrifices of Jesus Christ, who offered Himself as the first-born by excellence; and the blood of Abel, the just and innocent, put to death by his brother Cain represents Jesus Christ put to death by the Jews, or, rather, according to the Scripture and the fathers, it is in the person of Abel that Jesus Christ, the spotless Lamb, has been sacrificed from the beginning of the world, *Et sacrificium Patriarchae nostri Abrahæ*: and the sacrifices of our Patriarch Abraham. The Church has here in view the great and wonderful sacrifice which Abraham made of his only son, Isaac, in binding him, placing him upon the altar and raising the knife in obedience to God. Isaac, sacrificed without losing his life, was a figure of Jesus Christ immolated, in order to take a new life. Abraham is called a patriarch because, on

account of his faith and obedience, God made him the father of many nations and gave him a numberless posterity. . . . *Et quod tibi obtulit summus sacerdos tuus Melchisedech*, and the sacrifice of Thy high priest, Melchisedech. Melchisedech is called the high priest on account of the excellency of his priesthood and of its conformity with that of Jesus Christ; he is represented in Scripture without genealogy, king of justice, king of peace, priest of the Most High, offering bread and wine, and resembling Jesus Christ. It is according to his priesthood that Jesus Christ is made High Priest forever, the Savior having sworn: Thou art a priest forever, according to the order of Melchisedech. *Sanctum sacrificium immaculatam hostiam*, a holy sacrifice, a spotless host. We must remark here that the sacrifice of Melchisedech was not simply one of the sacrifices of the Old Law which figured the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, but it was the sacrifice which Jesus Christ Himself continued, so to speak, and the figure of which He perfectly fulfilled, since the matter of this sacrifice, which was bread and wine, was continued in the exercise of the priesthood of Jesus Christ, established a priest forever, according to the order of Melchisedech.

All the other prayers of the canon, with the exception of the words of consecration, are said with hands raised, the priest standing erect before the altar, but the prayer which follows is said with head bowed down and hands joined, that is to say, the priest pros-

trates himself before the divine Majesty as far as the action the sacrifice will permit. At the words *ex hac altaris participatione*, he kisses the altar and makes the sign of the Cross over the host, saying *corpus*, that is, body, and another over the chalice, saying *sanguinem*, that is, blood, in order to point out that here is the same body that was nailed to the Cross and the same blood that was shed. He makes the sign of the Cross, saying: *Omni benedictione coelesti*, because we cannot hope for blessings except through the merits of Jesus Christ crucified; and then continues the prayer: *Supplices te rogamus*, etc., that is, we most humbly beseech Thee, O Almighty God! Command these things to be carried by the hand of Thy holy angel to Thy altar on high, in the sight of Thy divine Majesty, that as many of us as participate at this altar shall receive the most sacred body and blood of Thy Son, may be filled with all Heavenly benedictions and through the same Christ, our Lord. *Amen.*

Supplices te rogamus. We beseech Thee. The Church makes this prayer in the name of those who are about to communicate, the priest makes it as an humble suppliant, *omnipotens Deus*, Almighty God. Whenever we ask anything important from God, we always address Him Almighty. *Jube haec perferri*, command that these things be carried. These things signify what we see and mean, consequently the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Veneration and awe would

be more appropriate than discussion. If we take these words literally, "Command these things to be carried to Thy altar on high," we must understand that these sacred emblems should be carried to Heaven, we must consider that the body of Jesus Christ, which we receive in communion, should not be annihilated. *Jube haec perferri*. The Church believes that Jesus Christ alone is worthy to present these holy gifts, she ardently desires that he would present them Himself in order that the oblation may be agreeable, both on the part of the gift and of Him who presents it. This desire causes the Church to say command, O God, through respect for Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Church does not say, command Jesus Christ, Thy Son, but says simply: command this body and blood to be carried and presented by the hands of Thy holy angel. We ask the holy angel to present them, the angel by excellence, the holy angel of God, the angel of high council, the angel of the Testament, who is Jesus Christ our Lord. It is also through respect that the Church, not wishing to name Jesus Christ directly, deigns Him also simply by the words "Thy Angel." The word angel means sent; Jesus Christ was the one sent by excellence, He is the Messiah, which means the one sent in sublime *altare tuum, in conspectu divinae majestatis tuae*, up to the high altar of God, in presence of Thy divine Majesty. What is this high altar which Jesus Christ continues to offer Himself? Where is it located? For there

is here greater than an altar distinct from the ministerial altar on which He is offered on earth. It would require a separate discourse to develop this question, and then we would have only a faint idea of it, and from this there would spring up a thousand questions, one more incomprehensible than the other. In a few words, this high altar is Jesus Christ, the man God; thus He is designated in many places in the Apocalypse, and the question is decided by the principle laid down by Jesus Christ Himself, that the altar of the sacrifice should be more holy than the gifts and the victim offered on it. Which is the greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? According to this principle it is necessary that the altar to which Jesus Christ should be carried should be more perfect, more holy than His humanity which is offered upon it, but nothing created is capable of being the altar of the humanity of Jesus Christ, and this altar can be nothing else than the person or the substance of the word to which it is closely united. It is on this altar that all the parts of the sacrifice are accomplished. Where is the temple in which this altar is placed? It is not in Heaven, because St. John, to whom God showed the altar, the victim and the sacrifice of the Church, appeared surprised because he did not see the temple. "And I saw no temple therein" (Apoc. 21:22). The temple in which the altar is placed is none other than the bosom of God the Father. The bosom of God alone is a

temple worthy of Him as being more holy than the humanity of His Son, who is offered to Him, and being the principle and source of all sanctity. This is truly the temple which sanctifieth the gift. "Whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world," are words read in St. John 10:36.

Jesus Christ is then at one and the same time the victim of His sacrifice, the altar on which it is presented to God, and the angel who carries it thither. But if the priest, the victim and the altar are in the bosom of God, why do we ask the gifts to be carried to Heaven, since they are there already? We must enter into the spirit of this prayer. There is question of those who receive communion, who participate in the sacrifice of the altar of our temple, in order that all those who participate at the altar will receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ in receiving the Heavenly benedictions and all the marks of the protection of God, and especially the grace which sanctifies. But in order that grace and benediction may be conferred upon us by virtue of the sacrifice the victim must be carried to the throne of God, and be placed in presence of the divine Majesty. God must receive it, and in consequence of His acceptance this victim draws the blessing down upon those who have offered Him.

The sense of this is that judging ourselves unworthy to present this spotless host to God, we beseech Him to be pleased that Jesus Christ, whom we

offer to Him on our material altar, and who continually offers Himself in Heaven for us, the offering of His body and blood which we make on earth, so that in participating at this altar we receive this sacred body and blood we may be filled by Him with his grace and benedictions. *Amen.*

END OF THE CANON OF THE MASS

“Have pity on me, at least you my friends, because the hand of God hath touched me.”—Job 19:21.

THESE words were addressed by the most patient of men, the holy man Job, to his friends, who, alas, were but too insensible to his misery. The Church makes use of them from time to time to awaken our attention with regard to those of our brethren who after edifying us here by a regular and Christian life, undergo in that place of expiation the sentence of merciful justice. The sanctity of God, incompatible with the slightest stain of sin, forces His paternal tenderness to draw from His presence and to purify by the avenging flames the souls of those just whose penance had not been proportionate to their daily weaknesses. Still He does so as a Father, who, whilst he chastises, regrets that He is forced to do so, and who wishes to be appeased, since He has established in His Church a means of comforting the afflicted souls and, lest insensibility or forgetfulness might lead us to lose sight of the help, we can procure them. Jesus Christ Himself has wished that in the very sacrifice of the Mass we would make a special mention of their wants, by a memento which is commonly called the

commemoration of the dead. This prayer prescribes a new order of duties; it requires special dispositions when reciting it.

When the priest says: *Memento etiam, Domine*, etc., he raises his hands and joins them above his breast, to testify his great desire to obtain the new grace which he asks by this prayer, which in English is: "Be mindful also, O Lord, of Thy servants, men and women, who are gone before us with the sign of faith and who slumber in the sleep of peace" (here the priest prays in silence for those whom he intends to pray, and then continues): "To Thou, O Lord, and to all who rest in Christ, grant, we beseech Thee, a place of refreshment, light and peace through the same Christ, our Lord. *Amen.*" *Memento etiam, Domine.* Be mindful also, O Lord. I said in a former instruction that remembrance on the part of God amounted to assistance. Before the consecration we asked the divine assistance for the living because they could join with the priest and offer with him and through him the holy host victim of the body of Jesus Christ, and by His grace prepare to share in the communion; but the dead are no longer able to offer, to communicate, to merit, or prepare themselves, they can only share in the fruit of the sacrifice and receive its application; we do not then implore divine assistance for those until after the consecration, because it is this participation, this application that we ask for them, since Jesus Christ

is present on the altar, and we offer Him to His Father, and since by His acceptance He confers His graces and benedictions.

It is this communion thus understood that the dead are capable of. The sacrifice of the Eucharist is the sacrifice of the whole Church, all the Church consequently should communicate and participate in it. The souls who suffer in purgatory are a part of the Church, a part of the mystic body of Jesus Christ, and can therefore participate in the sacrifice. But how do they participate in it? By receiving through its efficacy the application of the merits of the death of the Son of God, which He continues to offer on the altar, and the help they need to perfect their satisfaction to divine justice, and then enter into the communion of Saints in Heaven.

These souls have already participated in this sacrifice as many times as the grace of God and the spirit of Jesus Christ have been communicated to them. They have been, as it were, really sacrificed in their death with Jesus Christ, for the Christian who dies in charity, being united to that of Jesus Christ, becomes in some manner a sacrifice which consumes them; and when the sacred fire of charity which they had at the hour of their death is sufficiently strong to consume all their imperfections and all their stains, they pass from that moment into the venerable temple of God, who receives them as a sacrifice agreeable in His sight, and who receives them into His

bosom as a part of his own host who is Jesus Christ, according to the prayer which He made for His elect on the day of His sacrifice. "That where I am they also may be with me." (John 17:24.)

But when the fire of charity is not sufficiently strong to purify them and fit them to be offered to God with Jesus Christ in Heaven, the fire of purgatory supplies it, and there they burn, the relics of their faults are there consumed; this purification and this consumption are often hastened by the charity of Jesus Christ and that of His Church. When they are perfectly purified they enter into the place of refreshment, of light and peace, they communicate perfectly with God, as God, who in some manner communicates with them by receiving them into His bosom.

How admirable is this divine harmony of the Church on earth! How well it responds to the end of the sacrifice of the Mass! The Church offers herself in sacrifice with Jesus Christ. She unites with the Church in Heaven to make this offering; she asks relief and deliverance for the Church in purgatory, so that these three Churches are united in Heaven under Jesus Christ, their common head, they have but one heart, and a one voice to love, praise, bless and glorify God during all eternity, which is the great end of the Christian religion.

Who are the faithful for whom we ask God's help? and for whom we offer the sacrifice? Those who died in the love of Jesus Christ, and who merit to

be called His servants, male and female. *Memento etiam Domine famulorum famularum que tuarum.* Among the dead there are those who upon leaving this world enter into the enjoyment of God and His glory; we do not pray for them, on the contrary, we ask their prayers. Neither do we pray for those who die without the faith that worketh by charity. In vain would we offer the works of religion for them, because they have not received the grace of the sacraments, or perhaps they received them in vain, that is, without the right and proper dispositions, and they have amassed for themselves treasures of wrath, not of mercy; but we pray for those who, dying in the faith of the love of God, in the communion of the Saints and who not yet enjoying the happiness and glory of Heaven, need the prayers of the Church, either because they have not satisfied all the temporal punishment due to sin, the eternal punishment of which was remitted in the sacrament of penance, or because they are yet guilty of some faults which must be expiated.

In ancient times it was customary to name the persons for whom the priest intended to pray; but at present all that is required is for the priest really to make the commemoration: *qui nos praecesserunt cum signo fidei*, who have gone before us with the sign of faith. The Church prays only for those who die with the marks of faith, and sleep the sleep of peace. The death of those persons is called a sleep, because

they must rise up again for eternal life; it is also called the sleep of peace, because they die in the communion with the Church, which was always called peace. To die in peace, according to ancient mode of expression, was to die in communion with the Church, in the unity and society of the Church, without being separated by heresy, schism or by mortal sin; *Ipsis, Domine, and Thou, O Lord*, that is to say those for whom in particular the priest intends to pray, *et omnibus in Christo quiescentibus*, all those who repose in Jesus Christ. The Church wishes also that we should pray in general for all the faithful; *locum refrigerii lucis et pacis*, a place of refreshment, light and peace. We ask for them a place of refreshment, because the souls in purgatory suffer excruciating pains, and an abode of light and peace from which darkness and trouble are banished, because they are in a state of sadness, of trouble and oppression. *Per eundem Christum Dominum nostrum*. The Church asks this grace through Jesus Christ our Lord, who descended into hell to draw forth the souls of the just and lead them to Heaven.

When the priest says: *Nobis quoque peccatoribus*, he raises his voice slightly in order to call the attention of those assisting and cause them to enter into the sentiment which the words express; he then strikes his breast, a very natural gesture, by which he acknowledges himself a sinner and guilty. He then continues to pray, which is: “And to us sinners, Thy

servants, hoping in the multitude of Thy mercies, vouchsafe to grant some part and fellowship with Thy Apostles and martyrs, with John, Stephen, Matthias, Barnabas, Ignatius, Alexander, Marcellinus, Peter, Felicitas, Perpetua, Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, Cecilia, Anastasia, and with all Thy Saints into whose company we beseech Thee to admit us, not considering our merit, but freely pardoning our offenses through Christ our Lord." *Nobis quoque peccatobus*, and to us sinners. Having prayed for the souls in purgatory, the priest asks the same grace for himself and for all those who assist at the holy sacrifice; aware of his own unworthiness, he prays and strikes his breast and like to the publican spoken of in the Gospel, acknowledges himself a sinner. He raises his voice slightly in order that those present may hear him, join with him, humble themselves and implore divine mercy. In order that this action may not be an empty sign, strike your breasts as the priest does, enter into sentiments of humiliation and compunction which will express this avowal of your miseries and sins: *Nobis quoque peccatoribus*, to us sinners. Ask that your unworthiness may not prevent you from being united with the Saints who reign in Heaven.

But is it not presumption on our part to ask God to admit us among the number of His Saints, whilst at the same time we acknowledge ourselves sinners? Undoubtedly, such would be the case if we counted

on our own merits, and, if we placed our confidence in ourselves, but we represent to God that, although we have the misfortune of being sinners, we also have the honor of being His servants, *famulis tuis*; that we are in a way to be favored by His grace because we confide in His infinite goodness and on the multitude of His mercy, "*de multitudine meserationum tuarum sperantibus*"—hoping in the multitude of Thy mercies. It is then with profound humility that we ask Him to deign to associate us with His holy Apostles and martyrs. Before the consecration we made a memento of the communion of Saints, in which it was necessary to offer the universal sacrifice of Heaven and earth. In this prayer we make mention of them only to ask God to grant us some share of their eternal happiness. We here name many Saints of different states which are in the Church: St. John the Baptist, of the order of Prophets; St. Stephen, of the order of Deacons; St. Matthias, of the Apostles; St. Barnabas, a disciple of the Apostles; St. Ignatius, a bishop; St. Alexander, a pope; St. Marcellinus, a priest; St. Peter, an exorcist of the order of Clerics; St. Perpetua and St. Felicitas, married persons; Sts. Agatha, Lucy, Agnes, Cecilia and Anastasia, who were virgins; *et omnibus sanctis tuis*, and with all Thy Saints. We name all the other Saints in general and humbly ask God to admit us into their society. And we add that He would grant this grace

not in consideration of our merits, but in mercy towards us, non aestimator meriti, sed veniae largitor. We pray that God would not regard our merits, because that which appears good in our eyes is very often bad in the sight of God. All our merits are only a pure effect of God's grace and mercy through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The priest concludes the canon by saying: Per quem haec omnia, etc., that is: By whom, O Lord, Thou dost always create, bless and give us good things, through Him and with Him and in Him is to Thee, God the Father Almighty, in the unity of the Holy Ghost all honor and glory for ever and ever. *Amen.* The priest makes the sign of the Cross at each of these requests to show that it is through the Cross that we receive all the good things we expect of the goodness and mercy of God; he uncovers the chalice and genuflects to adore the precious blood; he makes three crosses with the host over the chalice, saying: through Him, with Him and in Him, to show by this that every time we say Him we mean that the host and the chalice contain the same Jesus Christ who was slain on the Cross; he makes two other crosses with the host outside of the chalice, saying: all honor and glory belong to Thee, O God, the Father Almighty, in the unity of the Holy Ghost. When we name God the Father and the Holy Ghost, who are not personally united to the precious body and blood, the sign of the Cross is made outside of the

chalice to show that the sacrifice of the Cross of Jesus Christ is the highest gift we can offer to the honor and glory of the Divinity.

At the words "All honor and glory belong to Thee," the priest raises the host and chalice a little. This raising of the sacred species accompanies the words which express the honor and glory we should pay to God. Up to the twelfth century there was no other elevation in the Mass of the body and blood of Jesus Christ except this. The priest raised them sufficiently high that the people might see and adore Jesus Christ by whom all honor and glory is paid to the Trinity. This ceremony took place a short time before the communion and was very solemn. The gates of the sanctuary were opened, the heavy curtains which concealed the sanctuary during all the canon were drawn aside, and the priest presented the sacred mysteries to the adoration of the faithful; but since the custom of elevating the host and chalice after the consecration has been introduced, this second elevation is no longer so solemn; the priest raises the chalice and host slightly above the altar to preserve a vestige of the ancient custom.

Having explained the ceremonies which accompany the conclusion of the canon, let us take the words separately in order that we may determine their sense: *Per quem*, through whom, it is through Jesus Christ that God grants us every grace and favor; *haec omnia semper bona creas*, Thou dost always create these

good things. It is through Jesus Christ that God the Father has created all things, the bread and wine become the body and blood of His Son, not only in creating them at the commencement of the world, but is continually renewing them, *semper*, always by making the earth produce every year new grain, new grapes. *Sanctificas*. It is through Jesus Christ that the gifts offered on the altar become sacred and are separated from common uses; *vivificas*, it is by Jesus Christ that God vivifies them by changing them into the precious body and blood; *benedicis et praestas nobis*, it is through Jesus Christ that God confers a Heavenly blessing on the bread and wine and that having thus blessed them He gives it to us to be for us our life. *Per ipsum et cum ipso*, it is also through Jesus Christ, with Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ, all honor and glory are given to God the Father Almighty, through Jesus Christ as the true mediator between God and man, with Jesus Christ as God equal to God; in Jesus Christ as consubstantial with the Father.

Then the priest, raising his voice, says: *Per omnia secula seculorum*, world without end. These words do not belong to the *Pater Noster*, the Our Father, but are the conclusion of all the prayers of the canon. The priest pronounces them aloud in order that all present may give their consent. All that was said was said in the name of the people present, all those who compose the assembly should pray and speak in

the same spirit; they should consequently subscribe to all that is contained in the canon and say *Amen*.

Up to the thirteenth century this was the only *Amen* in the canon, and if since that time others have been added, they are to be said by the priest alone; whilst this amen should be said aloud by all present at the sacrifice. What faith, what piety, what fervor is contained in this one word! It is an act of public adoration, of union with the holy host, in a word, of all the sentiments expressed in the prayers which the priest recited alone. This *Amen* teaches the people that they are all priests, that they constitute but one and the same priest with Jesus Christ in the oblation which is made at the altar on earth of His body and blood. But let me ask you what meaning is there in the word, if during the canon you were neither attentive nor devout. What rashness for you to dare pronounce it. Do you not condemn yourselves? Let it then be the expression of your faith, of your adoration, of your union with Jesus Christ. In pronouncing it with these dispositions you will merit to be united with the great of Saints St. John saw before the throne of God and at the feet of the Lamb, clothed in white garments and holding palm in their hands, who, prostrating themselves, adored God, saying *Amen*, benediction, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor and power to our God, world without end. *Amen*.

THE PRAYERS WHICH FOLLOW THE CANON UP TO THE AGNUS DEI

“And it came to pass that, as he was in a certain place praying, when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him: Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.”—Luke 11:1.

IN the different ceremonies which accompany the august sacrifice of our altar, the Church leads us successively from the preparation to the instruction, from the instruction to the oblation, from the oblation to the consecration; and now by the prayer which we are to consider, she introduces us to that part of the Mass which should serve as a preparation for the communion. Here we might ask why did not the Church place the Lord's prayer at the head of all prayers which compose the liturgy, since it is the model of all our supplications to the Lord? The custom of the primitive Church will serve as an answer to this question. The Lord's prayer was the last prayer taught to the Catechumens, and then only immediately before the administration of baptism. It was looked upon as a prayer that belonged especially and peculiarly to the children of God, and those who were not of that number were considered unworthy of it. The custom of the Church to recite

the Lord's prayer aloud in that part of the Mass at which the infidels were not allowed to be present, for the prayer is always said in a low tone of voice when they can assist, is a vestige of this same spirit. By this the Church gives us to understand that the faithful should be already strengthened in their faith before confiding to them a prayer which would be of no use to them unless the spirit of faith directed its terms. Moreover, she considers this prayer a summary of all the requests a Christian can make, and all the dispositions which should lead to the altar. And this is the reason why the Church recites the Lord's prayer as a preparation for communion, and, in order to enter into her views, let us study the sentiments with which we should be animated whilst reciting it.

I do not intend to explain this prayer and its different petitions, as it will form a separate course of instructions to be treated hereafter.

I have already said that the Lord's prayer is a preparation for holy communion. Nothing is better calculated to dispose the Christian to unite himself with God, and to receive His grace, than this prayer, since it contains all that we can ask of Him, and every motive of our love for Him, for our neighbor and for ourselves. When this prayer is recited in the Mass there is always a preface to it, in order to impress upon the minds of the faithful the sentiments of respect with which they should recite it, for we would not dare call God our Father unless Jesus Christ com-

manded us so to do. The priest commences by saying Oremus, that is, let us pray, and then with hands joined he continues the preface to the Our Father, as follows: "Instructed by Thy saving precepts, and following Thy divine institution we presume to say Our Father. *Praeceptis salutaribus moniti.* Instructed by the salutary precepts. The petitions to the Father are precepts, because Jesus Christ has commanded us to make them. "Thus shall you pray," said the Lord, and these precepts are salutary, because they contain all that we can ask for our salvation.—*Et divina institutione formati*, and following the divine institution given us. Jesus Christ not only gave us rules for prayer, He was pleased also to give us the form of prayer.—*Audemus dicere*, we presume to say. This prayer raises us to so high an honor and contains so great an advantage for us in permitting us to call God Our Father, that we would not dare do so if our divine Lord Jesus Christ had not commanded us, and even dictated the terms.

This preface is very ancient; it is to be found almost word for word in the writings of St. Cyprian, who says that among his salutary precepts and divine commands Jesus Christ gave us the form of prayer and instructed us as to what we should ask for. The Church commands us to recite this prayer at the time Jesus Christ, who is the author of it, is present on the altar, to obtain for us from His Heavenly Father all that it contains.

In solemn Masses the clergy and people, and in low Masses, the minister for the people who assist at Mass, say: *Sed libera nos a malo*, but deliver us from evil, and the priest in a low tone of voice answers, *Amen*.

At all other times when the priest prays for all, the people answer *Amen*, but in this case, the priest answers *Amen*. Now, why this different custom? *Amen* on the lips of the priest has a particular signification; he answers it in a low tone of voice, because he represents Jesus Christ, who is the *Amen*, that is to say, the seal, the truth, the accomplishment of all the promises, the merit, the price and efficacy of the prayers of the Church, the foundation of our hope. The priest who at the altar stands as mediator between God and the people, speaks to God in the name of the people, and speaks to the people on the part of God. And for this reason when the priest recites the prayer aloud, each one present should join his intention with Jesus Christ, who prays for all in the person of the Celebrant; each one raising up his heart to God to ask Him for the grace and assistance of which he stands in need, and this is why the people instead of saying *Amen*, answer: lead us not into temptation, and then the priest, speaking on the part of God, says *Amen*, as he would say God sees your faith and the sincerity of your prayer, your prayers are heard, and God grants what you have asked Him in the name of His Son, and by the virtue of His sacrifice.

Among all the petitions contained in the Lord's prayer

the Church stops only at the last, which is the abridgment and the recapitulation of the whole prayer in which we ask to be delivered from all evil. The Church gives greater scope to these petitions, to teach us that, although the Lord's prayer contains all that we can and all that we should ask, nevertheless, God does not refuse to hear us if moved by any particular good, or frightened by any particular evil; we determine to speak to Him with greater concern, provided the object of our prayer relates to His glory and our salvation.

This prayer was added to the Our Father in the first ages of the Church, and is to be found in the most ancient books which were used at the altar. It would seem that the Church in all the words which compose this prayer had in view the persecutions which she suffered from the idolatrous emperors; it speaks of evils past, present and future; it asks for peace, exemption from all sin and tranquillity of mind in order to be able to serve God with greater liberty. It would seem also that the faithful had a high idea of this prayer, and that this idea was inspired by the special care and attention which the Church paid to its recitation. It is pronounced in a louder tone of voice than all the other prayers of the canon of the Mass, doubtless in order that those present might join in and follow it, and the custom is still preserved of saying it on Good Friday in the same tone as the Collects, because on that day consecrated to

bring to our minds the mystery of our Redemption, because the Church reunites all the objects of the other prayers which she said separately at other parts of the year; this prayer comprising them all, the Church wishes that this day the prayer should be said with greater solemnity.

This prayer is: "Deliver us, O Lord, we beseech Thee, from all evils past, present and to come, and by the intercession of the Blessed and ever glorious Virgin Mary, Mother of God, together with Thy blessed Apostles, Peter, Paul and Andrew and all the Saints, mercifully grant peace in our days, that by the assistance of Thy mercy we may be always free from sin, and secure from all disturbances, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, Thy Son, who with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth God, world without end, *Amen.*"

Deliver us, we beseech Thee, O Lord, from all past evils. The past evils are our past sins. What uneasiness should they not give us! These evils are the bad effects caused by sin, and for which we are responsible; they are the impressions and traces they have left upon the mind and on the senses. The present evils are those which actually afflict us either in mind or body, such as temptation or sickness and generally all the evils that come to us from within or without, whether we feel them or not. Evils to come, future evils; future evils are those which might come to afflict us beyond our strength, but especially those

we fear for the future, as the natural consequences of our sins, and which are the temporal punishments, as afflictions, disgrace, and above all others, the eternal punishments reserved for the reprobate.

The Church asks not only for deliverance from sin which, properly speaking, is the only evil, and of which all other evils are only consequences, but she asks also for peace, which is the abridgment of all good things. Mercifully grant peace in our days. By this peace was meant in the early Church deliverance from persecution, which was the source of a great multitude of sins, as well on the part of the persecutors as the persecuted. By this peace we ask also to be delivered from all disturbances, capable of preventing us from serving God in tranquillity. We ask principally for peace of heart, which is the most essential disposition for those who are about to receive communion. Peace with God, which consists in perfect reconciliation with Him who is the end of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ; peace with ourselves by the overthrow of our passions, our inordinate desires and our lust, which is the effect of the sacrifice; peace with our neighbor, by a charity full of mildness which is the example Jesus Christ gave us in His sacrifice.

This is the peace we ask of God, by imploring the most powerful assistance, the intercession of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, Mother of the God of Peace, and who is the ordinary resource of the

Church; the intercession of the three first of the Apostles, who on the part of Jesus Christ have announced peace to the world, and the intercession of all the Saints, who, being in the bosom of happiness itself, are most zealous to procure it for us.

This is the peace for which the priest asks when making the sign of the Cross, to give us to understand that it is by the Cross that Jesus Christ, who is our peace, has destroyed by this body we are about to receive, everything that can trouble it, "For He is our peace, breaking down the middle wall of partition, the enmities of the flesh." (Eph. 11:14.)

It is this double peace, peace of mind and peace for the Church that we ask of God in this prayer, and which we expect from Him only through the help of His mercy and grace perfectly gratuitous. As peace of heart cannot subsist with sin, the Church asks to be always delivered from it, and as persecutions, wars and dissensions do not take from her every kind of true peace, but are, on the contrary, a great source of advantage to her. She does not ask to have absolute peace from the world, as is the case with sin, to be always delivered from trials, injustice, afflictions and calamities, but to preserve in the midst of trials and persecutions that tranquillity, that confidence and firmness which enable her to triumph over her enemies. This is the end or aim of the prayer, which terminates as usual with the words: *per eumdem Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum*. Through the

same Jesus Christ our Lord, who is our God and our Redeemer.

During the conclusion of this prayer, the priest according to a very ancient custom of the Church breaks the host. In the action of the sacrifice the Church does not omit anything which Jesus Christ did in His sacrifice. It is said of Him that He broke the bread, and when the Apostles speak of communion they call it breaking of bread. "The bread which we break is it not the communion of the body of our Lord?" (1 Cor. 10:16.) It is also said of the Apostles that they broke the bread from house to house. (Acts 11:46.) In the Latin Church, the host is divided into three parts, one of which is put into the chalice. Formerly the priest took the second part to give communion to himself and those assisting at the Mass, and the third part was kept to be brought to the sick. To avoid any inconvenience which might arise from breaking the host for the communion of the people, a number of small particles are now consecrated.

The breaking of the host is accompanied with a desire for peace which the priest expresses aloud by saying, "May the peace of the Lord be with you always." *Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum.* From this prayer up to the communion the Church constantly asks of God that double peace, peace of the soul with God and with our brethren, by charity and the forgiveness of sins, and peace of the Church with

regard to the world, by the suppression of persecutions and dissensions; and then the priest wishes for the people not the peace of the world, but the peace of the Lord, *pax Domini*, and expresses this wish by holding in his hands the sacred body of Jesus Christ, by whom all things have been pacified. He makes the sign of the Cross three times, in honor of the three divine persons who grant us peace in consideration of the merits of the Cross. These crosses are made over the chalice from side to side, lest any fragment of the host might fall outside.

Having said aloud, "May the peace of the Lord be with you always," the assistants answer, "and with thy spirit." The priest then drops into the chalice the broken part of the host. This is a very ancient custom, being marked out in all the liturgies and councils. The priest mixes the body and blood of Jesus Christ, consecrated under the species of bread and wine for a mysterious reason, which is to mark the reunion of the body and blood of Jesus Christ and His glorious resurrection. Up to this part of the Mass the Church expressed only the death and passion of Jesus Christ by the separate consecration of His body and His blood. According to the Council of Trent, it is quite certain that by virtue of the sacramental words pronounced over the bread, the body is consecrated alone, and that by virtue of the sacramental words pronounced over the chalice, the blood is also consecrated alone. It is, however, an article

of faith that this separation is only mystic, and that in reality the body is not without the blood, nor the blood without the body, since the body of Jesus Christ is truly a living and glorious body. Now it is very important that the death of Jesus Christ and His glorious resurrection should be represented in the sacrifice, because the sacrifice of our altar is the renewal of the sacrifice He offered by dying on the cross and which He offers now living in Heaven. The body and the blood consecrated separately are the sign of His death. The body and blood reunited is a sign of the life which He took at the time of His resurrection, for the species of the wine penetrating the species of the bread represents to us that the body and the blood remain together and are united as in a living body.

When the priest drops the particle of the host into the chalice, he says, "May this mixture and consecration of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ be to us who receive it effectual to eternal life."

We ask by this mixture, which is a symbol of the mutual union of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, for eternal life, which is promised only through the body and blood of the Redeemer.

Let us not content ourselves with desiring the peace of the Lord in this life, let us carry our lives still farther and by this prayer wish that full perfect and eternal peace which the Saints enjoy as the reward of their conflicts and victories. This peace is the effect of the sacrifice which is offered by the consecration

and consummated by the communion of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, of which the mixture of the consecrated species is a sign, prefiguring the mixture which will take place in God and man, by the perfect and eternal communion of Heaven, in which the Saints are perfectly consecrated, sacrificed to God and consummated in His unity and peace.

What, then, should be our dispositions when we receive communion, since by participation in the holy victim, there is made a mixture of God and man? Should they not be holy since by reason of the transitory connexion of the body of Jesus Christ, which is made here below, we may one day be united to God in glory?

AGNUS DEI

“The next day John saw Jesus coming to him, and he said: Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who taketh away the sins of world.”—John 1:29.

THIS testimony given in favor of Jesus Christ by John the Baptist to the people who came to hear him and receive his baptism, must have been astonishing to the Israelites. Not, however, because the prophets had not designated the promised Messiah under the figure of a lamb; but because the carnal-minded Jews could not reconcile the magnificent ideas they had formed of their Redeemer, with the simplicity of this figure. For us, far from being scandalized at this figure, we recognize in it the true character of Him who was slain for us, we know that He is truly the lamb chosen of God to be the only victim of propitiation given to mankind, to inspire them with mildness and docility. Thus when the Church speaks these words or rather when she invokes Jesus Christ in this quality, it is not difficult for us to give to this prayer the meaning which it contains and to incite in us those sentiments which would make it useful for us. But what is of great importance for us to study on this occasion, is the connection which exists between this prayer and those which precede it, and fol-

low it. By this prayer we commence an essential part of the Mass, viz.: the communion: it prepares the priest for it, and the assistants by pronouncing the words give to Jesus Christ testimony of their confidence and humility, when they come from the heart, well calculated to form the disposition which the preparation for our sacred mysteries requires. Let us then following this idea learn to recite this prayer with the sentiments prescribed.

The goodness of Jesus Christ is such towards us, that it comes from Heaven to bring us peace: He has freed us from all our iniquities; He took them upon Himself and expiated them by nailing them to the Cross, and by that means reconciled us with God. He is present on the altar, we should then approach Him with confidence, we should implore His mercy and ask His grace that we might receive Him worthily, and with Him the assurance of life eternal. Striking our breasts with sorrow and repentance mingled with confidence and gratitude, we should say with the Church: "Lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world have mercy on us." We should redouble our eagerness until through His mercy He obtains for us reconciliation with God, and the peace we desired. "Lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world." *Dona nobis pacem*, give us peace.

Lamb of God, this is the appellation given to Jesus Christ. Among all the victims of the Old Law none could better express His mildness and innocence, none

could better represent the meaning and efficacy of His sacrifice. Because God wished to accomplish in favor of mankind those designs of peace by the mission of His Son, that He wished the blood of a lamb rather than of any other animal should be placed over the doors of the Israelites, because it was the test figure that could be given to the blood of Jesus Christ, who alone could please Him and release us from the captivity of the devil. It is in this sense that St. John says in the Apocalypse: "That He was the Lamb slain from the commencement of the world." (13:8.) *Qui tollis peccata mundi.* Who taketh away the sins of the world. St. John the Baptist teaches us that the Messiah came to take away the sins of the world. God had announced to Daniel the coming of the Savior when he said: "That iniquity would be washed away and sin destroyed." (9:24.) Isaiah (53:6) represented the Messiah as a lamb charged with our iniquities destined to be slain, but He bears and is charged with our iniquities only to expiate them.

This divine victim is actually upon the altar; love for us placed Him there. Let us then say with the liveliest sentiments of confidence which in His mercy He gave us: have mercy on us. If we feel the want of His grace, we redouble our cries; have mercy on us. Grant unto us the peace of the Lord, that peace which reconciles us with God by the remission of our sins: *dona nobis pacem.*

In Masses for the dead, the Church occupied with

the souls of purgatory, instead of saying have mercy on us, asks repose for those souls, that is to say, relief from their pains; and the third time she asks for the complement of happiness, that eternal repose which the Saints will forever enjoy in Heaven, and as the peace which the priest asks for himself and for the Church does not belong to them, he does not say *dona nobis pacem*, nor the following prayer, which I will undertake to explain. The priest, bowed down and holding his hands joined on the altar, and eyes fixed upon the Blessed Sacrament, says in a loud voice: *Domine Jesu Christe*, etc., that is, "Lord Jesus Christ who said to Thy Apostles: Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, regard not my sins, but the faith of Thy Church, and vouchsafe it that peace and unity which is agreeable to Thy will who livest and reignest God, forever and ever. *Amen.*"

Lord Jesus Christ, Christ means anointed, and Jesus signifies Savior. The divine Jesus is our Savior because He bought us by His blood, and He is both Christ and Savior, because He was anointed and consecrated of God His Father to give us liberty and life. Who said to His Apostles: My peace I leave you, my peace I give you. The priest who said for himself and for all the people: Lamb of God who take away the sins of the world have mercy on us, feels himself forced to make known to the Savior, that this peace should be looked upon as the greatest good for Christians, since in giving to His Apostles the strong-

est marks of His love, the night before His passion and death he said to them: I leave you my peace, I give you my peace. Regard not my sins. The priest here speaks of his own sins, and not of the sins of those who are present at the Mass; he looks upon himself when at the altar as an unworthy servant; he acknowledges himself charged with numberless crimes, sins, and offenses; he speaks of himself when he says my servitude, but on the contrary he calls those who are assisting at the sacrifice, children of the family, the family which he names with respect, as the holy people, and if in one single place he mentions them among enemies when he says: Nobis quoque peccatoribus, and to us also sinners, he strikes his breast as if he were the only guilty one in the whole assembly: his humility leads him to take care of his own faults. This is the disposition which actuates him when he says: O Lord, regard not my sins, sed fidem Ecclesiae tuae, but the faith of Thy Church. He would wish that it was the Church alone, the Church pure and holy that made known to God her great desire for peace; he fears lest his sins might put an obstacle in the way of the grace he asks, and consequently he prays that God would not regard his sins, but the faith of the Church whose minister he is, that He may grant this so much desired. *Aamque secundum voluntatem tuam pacificare et custodire digneris*, and deign to grant peace and union according to Thy will. This peace, so often asked in the Mass, and

which according to the will of Jesus Christ is that firm peace which He enjoys and which should unite all the members of the Church, as He wishes they should be united among themselves and in God, according to the prayer which He made to His Father, after He said to His Apostles: I give you my peace. Who being God liveth and reigneth forever and ever. *Amen.* The priest asks this grace from Jesus Christ, because He is God omnipotent, and because He can do all that His Father can do because He liveth and reigneth with Him forever and forever. *Amen.*

This was the only prayer used in ancient times, because all the other prayers which preceded it might be taken as a sufficient preparation for communion. But many holy persons finding themselves as overcome with respect and a holy fear as the moment of receiving the precious body of Jesus Christ approached, that they asked again for the remission of their sins and the graces which communion should produce in a soul well prepared. The faithful who prepare themselves for communion could not do better than to enter into the spirit of the prayer which the priest says instead of following the various other prayers that are to be found in prayer-books. It is greatly to be feared that the faithful accustom themselves to say a great many things, which their hearts belie, when they recite the different prayers which are to be found in these books as a preparation for communion. They sometimes make protestations

and promises which are inconsistent with the weakness which their many relapses have unfortunately had them feel. The prayers which the Church puts in our mouth here are not subject to these inconveniences, because they are perfectly in accordance with our state in life and wants, and they express all the dispositions we should have.

The first of these prayers which the priest says, when bowing down before the Blessed Sacrament, begins with: Domine Jesu Christe, that is, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who according to the will of Thy Father, through the co-operation of the Holy Ghost, hast by Thy death given life to the world, deliver me by this Thy most sacred body from all my iniquities and from all evils, and make me always adhere to Thy commandments, and never suffer me to be separated from Thee who with same God the Father and the Holy Ghost livest and reignest, God forever and ever. *Amen.*"

Lord Jesus Christ Son of the living God. The priest addresses Jesus Christ and calls Him Son of the living God, of God the Father, who is the principle of life and who communicates it to His Son with the sovereign power to communicate to whomsoever He wishes. "For as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He also given the Son to have life in Himself." (John 5:26.)

And the Son gives life to whom He pleases. The life of grace is necessary to partake of the sacred

Eucharist which is the food of the soul with which she cannot be nourished unless in living this life of grace.—*Qui per mortem tuam mundum vivificasti*, who by Thy death gave life to the world. Jesus Christ in giving life to the world by His death, in expiating in His body on the Cross all the punishments due to sin which gave us death. *Ex voluntate Patris*, by the will of the Father. The priest interests all the Blessed Trinity to obtain that life which God promised. He represents to Jesus Christ that it is by the will and authority of His Father that He gives life to the world. “Is it not,” says St. Paul, “the will of the Heavenly Father that we live, when we were dead by Sin?” Says the Apostle, “He hath quickened us together in Jesus Christ.” That is, He hath given us life in Jesus Christ by the grace through which we are saved. *Co-operante spiritu Sancto*, the Holy Ghost co-operated in the salvation we receive from Jesus Christ by forming His body in the chaste womb of the Virgin Mary to be a holy and agreeable host; He co-operates in it daily by contributing, on the altar, to the transubstantiation of the adorable body of Jesus Christ, so that it may be offered to give life to our soul. *Libera me per hoc sacro-sanctum corpus et sanguinem tuum*. Deliver me by this holy and sacred body and by this blood. The priest, persuaded that Jesus Christ possesses all the power of the divine persons to give us life, confidently asks it by His sacred and His precious blood which are in

the sacrifice of the altar to apply to us the merits of His death. *Ab omnibus iniquitatibus meis*: all that which is offered to the life of the soul, that is sin, and on this account the priest says deliver me from my iniquities, and from everything which can lead me to sin, and the dangers which surround me. Give me grace, O Lord Jesus, to remain firmly attached to Thy precepts and never to separate myself from Thee. We cannot have true life except we keep the divine precepts. If thou wouldst enter into life, said the Lord, keep the commandments and never permit me to be separated from thee: the true means of avoiding the evils of the soul and of observing the commandments in a Christian manner, is to be always attached to Jesus Christ, and we are always united to Him when we do His will, and in order to unite ourselves in such a manner that we cannot be separated, He should be the principle of all our thoughts, of all our words, of all our desires, and of all our actions. If our love was as strong as St. Paul's, we would be able to say: Who shall separate us from the love of Jesus Christ? But dangers, temptation, our weakness, oblige us to ask Him that he would never allow us to be separated from Him, who, being God, liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, world without end. *Amen.*

The second prayer which the priest makes before communion begins with the words: *Perceptio corporis tui*, etc.; that is, Let not the participation of

Thy body, O Lord Jesus Christ, which I all unworthy presume to receive, turn to my judgment and condemnation, but through Thy goodness may it be to me a safeguard, a remedy, both of soul and body, who with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Ghost, livest and reignest. God forever and ever. *Amen.* Miserable sinners that we are, do we not know that we are unworthy of such grace? Who are we, worms of the earth, that we would approach the God of Majesty, to seat ourselves at His table? Who is there that is worthy of holding in his hands and eating the bread of angels, of nourishing himself with the flesh of a God, of possessing within his body sanctity itself? Have we not reason to fear that we are blind as to our state? The bishop of Laodicea thought that he had all kinds of graces and virtues; however, St. John wrote to him on the part of God, that he saw his luke-warmness, that he was truly poor, naked and blind, seeing neither his faults nor his weakness. Who, then, would dare receive the body of Jesus Christ without trembling?

This fear leads the priest to pray to Jesus Christ that he would not incur the judgment and condemnation merited by those who receive the source of sanctity with a criminal soul, but that through His goodness it would be a safeguard and a remedy both of soul and body; he asks that through His mercy the sacred body and the precious blood might be a preservation, both of mind and body, against all sins,

mortal and venial, and that this divine food might give him the courage and strength necessary to resist all the attacks of the enemy of his salvation, and that it might be a salutary remedy. As we cannot promise ourselves that we will be without wounds and scars since we are weak and feeble, and since we often fall into a great many faults, the priest again asks Jesus Christ that His precious body might be a remedy against all the evils which we know not; that He would repair the strength we lose daily; that He would cure the wounds our souls incessantly receive; that as He restores our body and soul to the immortality they lost by sin, it might be a germ, a seed, a principle of life, for eternal happiness.

How rare are these graces, since the conduct of the majority of Christians who go to communion, is not more Christian or edifying after communion. Let Thy sacrament, O Lord! cure all our weaknesses. I speak to Thy precious body, which I am about to receive; make my soul so pure by Thy sovereign purity that it may no longer have either stain or wrinkle. I am sick, but Thou art the sovereign physician; I am full of miseries, but Thou art the God of Mercy. Then the priest asks Jesus Christ, who is all powerful, who liveth and reigneth with God the Father, in the Holy Ghost with whom He is one and the same God, world without end. *Amen.*

COMMUNION OF THE PRIEST

“Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy name give glory.”
—Psalms 113:9.

THE nearer the moment of the consummation of sacrifice approaches, the more should the Christian be penetrated with the sentiment expressed in these words. Christ sacrificed Himself for us. In the prayer which accompanies the sacrifice He was attentive only to our wants, and soon He will prove to all those who approach His sacred table that He prepared the banquet for them, and that it was His delight not only to converse with them, but to live for them. We cannot repeat too often with the prophet: “What is man, O Lord, that Thou wouldst be mindful of him, or the Son of man that Thou shouldst visit him?” Man is but dust and ashes; corruption and misery cover him as a garment; and the oftener he hears through the Church that Christ comes upon earth for him, that it was for him He offered Himself in sacrifice, the oftener he will say with the prophet, “Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy name give glory.” This is the spirit and the meaning of the prayer we will undertake to explain and which commences with the words: *Domine non sum dignus*. O Lord, I am not

worthy. The Church desires us to always keep in mind that in whatsoever God does for us, His attributes of mercy and indulgence shine forth, and that on the part of those He admits to His holy table, there is nothing but weakness and unworthiness, and the more the Christian feels his misery the nearer he approaches the dispositions this sacrament requires.

According as the moment of the consummation of the sacrifice approaches, the greater should be our desire to participate in it. If through love of us Jesus Christ so wonderfully desired to eat the last passover, should we not also ardently desire to participate in that passover so precious, so advantageous and so necessary for the life of our soul? What would be the consequence if we had no desire for this Heavenly food, if we partook of it with indifference, or without a relish? If distaste be a sign of sickness in the body, can we not say that the soul is sick when it receives the living bread in an indifferent manner without a sense of hunger or relish?

What do we mean here by the word hunger? We mean a void in the heart, an interior want which requires repletion from God. This spiritual hunger should precede the Heavenly nourishment. We learn from Moses that God made the Israelites feel this hunger in the desert before He caused the manna to fall from Heaven. "He afflicted them with want and gave them manna for food." (Deut. 8:3.) With this spiritual hunger the heart is as it were impatient

for the moment when the living God will come to visit it. And like the prophet it rejoices as the moment approaches. "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God." (Ps. 83:3.) Whosoever does not feel this joy bears within himself an infallible sign of imperfection, of self-love. It were better for him to remain away until he has learned to mortify his passions, subdue his evil desires and purify his heart.

On the contrary, thrice happy is he who, when about to receive the bread of life, feels a real hunger for it, for he who feels his want will cry out from his heart with all the eagerness of a hungry and starving man: "I will take the Heavenly bread and I will invoke the name of the Lord." The name of God, that is the Majesty of God, which is the same as to call upon God Himself. I will invoke Him. I will call upon Him to my aid, my support and my life. Whilst saying these words the priest takes the sacred body of Jesus Christ in his hands, and feeling that the moment has arrived when he will be united, when he will be incorporated with his God, he trembles, he acknowledges the infinite disproportion between the sinner and Him who is sanctity itself. He bows profoundly at the thought of infinite Majesty deigning to become his food and with the holy man Job exclaims: "What is man, O Lord, that he should be raised to such glory?" And who are we sinners, worms of the earth, that we should approach a God so holy? to be

fed with His divine flesh. The priest, conscious of his weakness, strikes his breast thrice whilst repeating the words: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, say but the word and my soul shall be healed." Lord, I am not worthy. Man by reason of his unworthiness should indeed be humble; why should he not fear at finding himself so near his God, who is a consuming fire? What proportion is there between the King of Glory and vile creatures? Heaven and earth cannot contain the Son of God; how, then, can He dwell within our bodies, those bodies of clay, which have so often deserved to be reduced to ashes. The priest joining his humility with faith in God, omnipotent, represents to Him that without coming to Him and by one word alone He can heal his soul and fill it with every grace and blessing. "Say but the word and my soul shall be healed." He remembers also that Jesus Christ commands us to receive Him, and seems as it were to say: Thou hast commanded us, O Lord, to receive Thee, Thou canst purify and prepare me in an instant, and then he adds, "May the body of our Lord Jesus Christ protect my soul unto life eternal," and then partakes of the sacred body. The body of Jesus Christ, the same that was sacrificed on the Cross to glorify the Father, becomes the food of our souls. Although the flesh of the Son of God, who is the victim of our sacrifice, is but a material substance, it has power to vivify our spirits. In the natural order of things it

is the spirit that vivifies the body, but here, by a surprising miracle, it is the body that vivifies the spirit, sustains it, animates it and serves as food to preserve it. It is only the power of God that can perform so surprising a miracle.

And this is not all. The body of Jesus Christ is given to us as an assurance of the glory of Heaven, as a pledge of eternal happiness, as a viaticum to assist us in our journey from the place of our exile to our country, our true home, Heaven. This body is a divine salt which preserves our bodies from the corruption of the world and sin; which consumes everything in it that is carnal and earthly, which makes it pleasing to God and gives it, so to speak, a foretaste of Heaven. "May it keep my soul unto life eternal."

The priest, after receiving the host, meditates for a short while on the goodness of the mystery, whilst he is swallowing the host and prepares to recite the prayers which follow; for the Mass is composed of an action, composed of the things we should do or what we should say; there is no room for private devotion. After swallowing the host he says, How shall I repay the Lord? At the same time he uncovers the chalice, genuflects and with the paten collects any fragments that may chance to remain on the corporal, and puts them into the chalice. She requires us to be exceedingly careful, lest the smallest article of the Eucharist should be lost or fall to the ground. Whilst gathering up the particles the priest says:

How shall I repay Thee, O Lord, for all that Thou hast done for me. I will take the chalice of salvation and I will invoke the name of the Lord. I will invoke the name of the Lord singing His praises, and I shall be free from my enemies. In order to enter into the spirit of this prayer and understand its meaning, we should be penetrated with sentiments of gratitude, fervor and love. It is impossible for us to be sufficiently grateful for the great gift received. Struck with astonishment and admiration, at seeing himself possessed of such un hoped for glory, the glory of being united, incorporated with his God, he knows not what to say or what to do, and these different emotions almost prevent him from perceiving the means of thanking him worthily; "How shall I repay Thee for all thou hast done for me." How much is there contained in these words? The priest receives only the body of Jesus Christ, and yet he says he has received everything. Jesus Christ is a universal gift which comprises all other gifts; for what is there that God did not give us when He gave us His Son? "With Him He hath given us all things," said St. Paul (1. Rom. 8:32). What ingratitude, then, if on our part we do not appreciate them, should we not be accounted monsters of impiety, if the perfect love of Jesus Christ finds no response in our souls. We should say to Him with the Prophet: Let my right hand be forgotten if I forget Thee, let my tongue cleave to my jaws if I remember Thee not." (Ps. 136:5, 6). And since the sacrament

of the body of Jesus Christ is a true Eucharist, that is a sacrament of thanksgiving, we should endeavor not only to prove by our conduct how much we are indebted for receiving it, but also to make use of it as a means of thanking God for all that He has given us and all that he still continues to give us. How can we repay Him for all His mercies, how can we acknowledge our many and great obligations, the graces we have received and the protection afforded us if not by participating in this mysterious chalice?

The chalice which the priest takes is the chalice of salvation, because it contains the author of our salvation, Jesus Christ, in whom we have everything necessary to praise and thank God. The chalice of His blood is the chalice of benediction which has been offered in thanksgiving by the divine Savior. In this chalice the priest finds wherewith to thank God worthily. *Et nomen Domini invocabo*, "And I will invoke the name of the Lord." With this chalice I will call upon the name of the Lord, who promised to satiate His people with good things. (Jeremias 31: 14.) *Laudans invocabo Dominum*—Praising, I will call upon the Lord. On God alone will I depend; Him will I bless and praise forever. And I shall be free from my enemies. The grateful and confiding soul is sure to find in Him all the aid necessary against enemies; against the devil, who tempts us by his snares; against the world, which seduces us by its pomps; against the flesh, which corrupts us by its

lust and inordinate desires. We have but to ask that the blood of Jesus Christ would strengthen us, and that it would serve for us as a viaticum to life eternal. May the blood of Jesus Christ protect my soul unto life eternal. When the priest drinks the precious blood, in order to consummate the sacrifice, he asks for Christian perseverance, and seems to say: "I know my weakness and misery; I know that if Thou wouldst abandon me, O Lord, to myself, even for a moment, I would fall again into the abyss of my crimes; but by uniting myself as closely to Thee as I wish to be in taking this chalice of salvation, I have a right to rise above myself and promise myself that all inconstant and fragile though I may be, I will persevere in Thy love and in the possession of Thy grace; Thy blood will wash me from my sins and will protect me against the enemies of my salvation and lead my soul to life everlasting."

The priest, when taking the precious blood, holds the paten under the chalice, lest any drop may fall, and consumes the blood, together with the particle which is in the chalice, because he must consummate the sacrifice under both kinds, Jesus Christ having said to all the priests in the person of the Apostles, "Drink ye all"; and he consumes all the blood in the chalice, because the holy communion is not now, as formerly, given to the people under both species.

After this the priest says the prayer: *Quod ore sumpsimus*—"Grant, O Lord, that what we have

taken in our mouth we may receive with a pure mind and of a temporal gift; may it become for us an eternal remedy." He then offers the chalice to the clerk, who pours some wine into it to purify it. To purify a vase means, in the language of the Church, to remove from it whatsoever does not belong to it, and on this account the ablution of the chalice and the mouth of the priest, which is made after communion, are called purifications, and this is done in order that none of the body and blood of Jesus Christ may remain attached to them.

Quod ore sumpsimus. How much is comprised in these few simple words; what sentiments do they not contain? Enter into the spirit of the prayer: it concerns you as well as the priest, since you have a right to communicate with Him, at least spiritually. What we have taken in our mouth, may we receive it with a pure heart. We may then take the body of Jesus Christ in our mouth, and yet not receive it in our heart. What is the difference between these two kinds of communion? The communion of the heart consists in being nourished and satiated with the body of Jesus Christ; to draw from it a spiritual profit, an increase of grace, more perfect purity, and a complete detachment of self-denial. If, after communion, we remain the same, the communion was useless for us. But let us not be deceived in this matter. It cannot be useless without being prejudicial; if it does not destroy grace it weakens it, and we become guilty of

the body and blood of the Lord, not because we have profaned it, but because we have not honored it sufficiently. In a word, a useless communion prepares us for an unworthy communion, an unworthy communion leads to impenitence, and impenitence hurries us on to hell.

In this prayer we ask Almighty God that, through His mercy, this heavenly bread may be for us a remedy to sustain us during our voyage through life to eternity. The priest then takes the wine and water for the ablution of the chalice and his fingers, which he wipes with the purificator whilst saying: "May Thy body, O Lord, which I have received, and Thy blood, which I have drank, cleave to my bowels, and grant that no stain of sin may remain in me, who have been refreshed with pure and holy sacraments."

Having asked of God in the preceding prayer that His body and His blood might be a remedy unto eternal life, the priest prays that they may be for him a nourishment that will increase his strength and remain with him so that he may be able to say, with St. Paul, "I live, now not I, but Jesus Christ lives in me" (Galatians 11:20), in order that there may remain no stain of sin in me. Corporal food, well digested, so strengthens the body that even after the most severe attack of sickness, no trace of the malady remains. The priest asks that his spiritual strength may be increased; that, by virtue of the sacred body, there may remain in him no trace of sin or crime, but

that, on the contrary, the body of Jesus Christ may increase in him charity, which is the health and life of the soul.

After communion we should ask for an increase of charity, in these moments when we possess the source of love within ourselves, when the Heavens are opened and the just have come down upon earth. It sometimes happens that Jesus Christ comes to us and we remain cold and unmoved; we even bear a fire within us; we conceal it in our heart, and yet feel no impression from it.

Grant, O Lord, that we may feel the effects of that fire which Thou didst come upon earth to kindle—the fire of Thy divine charity. Say unto us, O Lord, that Thou art our salvation; but say it in such a manner that we may hear it. The consolation of having heard it will sustain us during life and lead us to love Thee more and more, that we may one day merit to love Thee throughout eternity.

COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE

“The chalice which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?”—1 Cor. 10:16.

THIS is the idea which St. Paul gave to the first Christians of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and this idea is in perfect conformity with the teaching of the Church regarding the sacrifice of the Mass. The benediction of the chalice and the breaking of the bread are not separate or distinct from communion in the blood of Jesus Christ and participation in His body. Firmly convinced that the communion is essential to the sacrifice, she looks upon the sacrifice as consummated only when the priest at least has consumed the species. Now, if the communion of the priest be indispensable for the integrity of the sacrifice, what must we think and say of the communion of the people, seeing that it is for them, as well as for himself, that the priest offered the holy victim? Are we not justified in concluding that participation in the victim is equally necessary for the people and those who minister at the altar? It is true that the actual or present custom of the Church seems to derogate from this necessity. The priest is obliged by the holy

action, but the people are bound only in a general sort of way, to unite themselves in spirit with the sacrament. It would be overstraining the matter to say that the sacrifice is no benefit to those who do not actually communicate, and it would be equally wanting in truth to teach that it is not the intention of the Church to require from the faithful, as far as it is possible, a desire to communicate as often as they assist at the sacrifice of the Mass. Between these two seemingly opposite opinions there is a happy medium, which every Christian should know, and which it is important for me to explain.

As you well remember, and as we have already seen in former instructions, the Mass is not a sacrifice for the priest alone—it is also for the people, for those who assist at it. The prayers are all common to priest and people, and even at the consecration which is performed by the priest in the name of Jesus Christ, whom he represents, all the actions of the sacrifice are common to priest and people. The communion being the consummation of the sacrifice, it is consequently a part which cannot be more exclusive or private than the rest; it must then be common to the people, as well as the priest. Hence it is that in the first ages of the Church, those who were excluded from the communion were also excluded from the sacrifice.

If, in the lapse of time, the Church, through condescension, has somewhat relaxed her ancient disci-

pline by permitting the faithful to assist at Mass, although they do not go to communion, it is her desire that they would go to communion, at least spiritually, in order that in this one part of the Mass—namely, communion—they may not be any different from the priest than in the other parts of the sacrifice. And this is very plainly laid down in the Council of Trent. It is the intention of the Church that those who assist at Mass should go to communion sacramentally, and she condemns those who speak of those Masses at which none but the priest communicates, as private Masses, and the reason is because she does not wish us to consider as a private action the Mass at which the priest alone receives it being a public sacrifice, not only because it is offered for all the people, but because all those who are present at it share in it at least by a spiritual communion. What we mean by a sacramental communion is when we receive with the priest, and like the priest, the sacred body of Jesus Christ; and a spiritual communion is when, uniting ourselves in spirit with the priest who officiates, we share, according to our dispositions, the graces and fruits of the sacrament.

As we have already treated of the sacramental communion when explaining the sacrament of Eucharist, it will not be necessary to repeat here the dispositions the faithful should have in order to receive communion; we will speak now only of the time when communion is to be made and the particular prayers

the Church uses in the administration of the sacrament.

The sacramental communion of the people should take place immediately after the communion of the priest, according to the constant tradition and discipline of the Church. From what we have said of the sacrifice, the part which the people take in it, their right to do what is done by the priest, and to share with him in the victim which is common to both, must we not conclude that they are obliged to go to communion during the Mass and to unite themselves with the priest in this great and holy action? There is no reason why they should, without great necessity, defer a part of the sacrifice until after the sacrifice is over. Before the communion of the people the clerk, in the name of those who are to go to communion, says the confiteor, and then the priest, turning towards them, says: *Misereatur vestri*, etc. "May the Almighty God, who alone can forgive sins, have mercy on you, and, having pardoned your sins, may He lead you to life eternal." The clerk answers *Amen*, and then the priest continues: *Indulgentiam*, "May the almighty and merciful God grant you indulgence, absolution, and remission of your sins," and again the clerk answers *Amen*.

Before communion the faithful make a general confession of their sins, after which the priest asks for absolution in their behalf, in order that they may publicly renew the sorrow or contrition with which

they should confess and expiate their sins, so that they may not be like those spoken of by St. Cyprian, who, without having expiated their faults, have the rashness to approach the sacred table.

The priest, holding the ciborium in his left hand, and in his right the consecrated particle, which he raises slightly, says: *Ecce Agnus Dei*, "Behold the Lamb of God." *Ecce qui tollit peccata mundi*, "Behold Him who takes away the sins of the world." What could be more expressive than these words, when holding up the Blessed Sacrament, and then the priest repeats three times the words "*Domine non sum dignus*." "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; say but the word and my soul shall be healed." He has already said these words for himself, and here he repeats them in the name of those who are to go to communion. The priest makes the sign of the Cross whilst saying: *Corpus Domini*—"May the body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul unto life eternal." He does this to show that it is the same body that was sacrificed on the Cross he puts into the mouth of the communicant.

At the end of this prayer he, himself, says *Amen*. How expressive this word just at that moment! It is an act of firm faith in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist, an act of the most profound adoration and homage which we owe to Jesus Christ as our sovereign and our God.

This *Amen* is a mark of the impression which the words of the priest make on those who receive the sacred body of Jesus Christ, and the promise they make to keep themselves in the same state in which they are when they receive the sacrament, that it may in a certain measure be for them an assurance of eternal life.

What should those who do not receive communion sacramentally do during the communion of the priest? They should make a spiritual communion.

Spiritual communion is the union of our mind and heart with the sacred body of Jesus Christ, whom we are not worthy to receive, or whom, through a religious fear, we dare not approach. It is receiving the spirit of Jesus Christ by participating in the graces merited for us by His sacrifice, and of which the Eucharist has been instituted as a channel. Sacramental communion is a real and substantial union of body with body, and the spiritual communion is a union of the spirit, the mind, the will, the affections, to the body of Jesus Christ, with the hope of receiving through it the graces we ask for. If the body of Jesus Christ has power to vivify those who partake of it, has it not also the power to vivify those who ardently desire to partake of it, and who would partake of it if their imperfections did not render them unworthy.

Spiritual communion is not made in same manner by all who assist at the sacrifice. Those whom

fear and humility keep away for some time from the sacramental communion, who, annihilating themselves in the presence of Jesus Christ, and who, on account of the greatness of the mystery, say, with St. Peter: "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man." In a word, those who are not guilty of any crime which separates them from the sacred table, communicate spiritually in a manner different from those who are excluded on account of their unworthiness.

The first communicate spiritually in the body of Jesus Christ, through the love they have for Him. When the priest communicates they excite themselves to a more perfect love; they reproach themselves for their faults and imperfections, their lukewarmness and sloth, in order that they may merit the grace to receive sacramentally afterwards with the purest and most holy dispositions. And as the property of love is to be united with the object loved, to attach, so to speak, the heart to the one loved, the effect of this love is to unite them more intimately with Jesus Christ, and to unite Jesus Christ more strongly to themselves; He abides in them and makes them abide in Him. For, according to the Fathers, the Eucharist is a banquet of love, where he who loves most enjoys the most; it is a table of charity; it is charity invites us there; it is charity that nourishes us, and it is charity that is nourished.

But how can those who have had the misfortune

of falling into sin communicate spiritually before they become reconciled with God in the sacrament of penance? Since the Church has been lenient in condescending in their favor; since she has relaxed the severity of her discipline and permits them to be present at the sacrifice of the altar and gives them a right to assist there, she consequently looks upon their presence there as useful to them. This usefulness can be found only in the part they take in the sacrifice, in the fruit they can draw from it, and the fruit they draw from the communion of those who have persevered in grace. In the one the participation in the spirit of Jesus Christ supplies, in a certain measure, for participation in the body; but in the other there is a participation which is distant, imperfect, commenced in the spirit of Jesus Christ, who does not yet dwell in them, and who only excites and invites them to penance. The former are one and the same victim with Jesus Christ, with whom they are offered, whilst the latter are unworthy of being united to Him on account of their unworthiness, because God rejects every unclean and sullied victim.

Their only resource is in the fact that the sacrifice of the Mass is a sacrifice of propitiation, in which Jesus Christ, continuing the sacrifice of the Cross, asks grace and mercy for the sinner from His Father, a sacrifice in which He offers to His Father His death and the blood He shed as the price of the sinner's redemption. He presents Himself to His Heavenly

Father the same as He was on Mount Calvary; He is present upon our altar only to renew all His sorrows; to consummate the reconciliation of the sinner by the application which He makes of His merits to them. Jesus Christ appears before His Father, charged with the sinner's crimes, and as an advocate He pleads our case.

But what part have you in the sacrifice? We see the wrath of God appeased by the humiliations of the body of Jesus Christ; we receive the grace and the dispositions necessary to approach the sacrament of penance, in virtue of which our sins are forgiven. This is the part we take in the sacrifice and the spiritual communion we can make, but in order to make this spiritual communion, something is required of us. An humble and contrite heart, a sincere, a solid and efficacious respect which will lead us to try to become worthy of Jesus Christ in His sacrament; a heart broken with sorrow for having separated ourselves from Jesus Christ by sin, for what advantage would be the respect which keeps us from communion on account of our unworthiness if it produced no effect upon us, and if we continue to remain cold, indifferent, and insensible to this great and most important act of religion? In the flourishing ages of Christianity, when the sinner remained away from communion he was undergoing the painful duty of penance, whilst in our day the penance of the Christian consists in remaining away from communion and

doing nothing to free himself from the frightful state.

We should then look upon it as the greatest evil that can befall us to be separated from a sacrament whose participation is the assurance of our happiness, or rather, which is our anticipated happiness. Should it not be a cause of sorrow for us to be deprived of this heavenly food, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, that if we are unworthy of receiving it, either sacramentally or spiritually at least, we should try, by our contrition and our humiliations, to share in its graces? Without these dispositions, what part can we have in the sacrifice of the Mass? Sin renders us unworthy of sacramental communion, and our impenitence makes us unworthy of a spiritual communion. Since both are essential for the sacrifice, and since we cannot take part in either, does it not follow there is no sacrifice for us? What a dreadful condition in the eye of faith! O Lord, we confess in the bitterness of our hearts that we are unworthy of having Thee under our roof; say but the word and our souls shall be healed. Thy power can overcome our resistance, and Thy mercy form in us a sincerely penitent heart. We ask that we may communicate spiritually in the sacrifice of Thy body, that we may receive grace which, in time, will make us worthy of receiving sacramentally those graces which will work out our salvation and lead us to life everlasting.
Amen.

END OF THE MASS

“All things whatsoever you do in word or in work, all things do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”—Colos. 3:17.

THE Mass throughout may be considered a continual thanksgiving. Jesus Christ is there called the Eucharistic victim; and every Christian wishing to be united to the sacrifice which he offers to the Father should share with Jesus Christ that gratitude which is due to God, whose mercy provides for all our wants and follows us with every blessing. Although thanksgiving belongs to the essence of the sacrifice, as the immolation and prayer, still it seemed necessary for the Church to consecrate a part of her liturgy to testify to God her gratitude for the unspeakable mystery which takes place on her altar, and for the infinite multitude of graces which this mystery confers upon the whole Church. This is the sentiment which pervades the latter part of the Mass, and the matter we will now consider; and thus end the series of instruction on the Mass, with which we have been occupied for a considerable length of time.

Gratitude is just as essential as any other dispositions which make us sharers in the fruits of the great sacrifice, and the Church requires the same fer-

vor and devotion and attention during the last prayers of the Mass as for any of the others which precede them.

When one has shared in the sacrifice of the Mass by communion, all ends with thanksgiving. The latter part of the Mass is composed of the anthem of communion and the post communion, and these contain the motives why we should appreciate the graces we have received, in order to preserve in our soul a desire to profit by them. When the priest has purified and covered the chalice he goes to the corner of the altar to read the anthem called the communion, because this versicle, which is generally taken from the Psalms, should be sung during the time of communion. The Apostolic traditions require the Thirty-third Psalm to be said during the communion, it being always considered as a hymn of thanksgiving. The present custom of the Church is to select one verse which has reference both to the feast celebrated and to the graces granted through the merits of Jesus Christ, to those who receive communion worthily. We cannot meditate too often on these anthems, for there we find the motives best calculated to inspire us with a desire of being united with Jesus Christ in the sacrament of His body and His blood.

After reading this anthem the priest returns to the center of the altar and, turning towards the people, says: "Dominus vobiscum"—"The Lord be with you." At the beginning of each action which consti-

tutes a separate part of the Mass the priest salutes the people, and this salutation, which we have already explained and which is so often repeated in the Mass, is here made because there is question of performing a great duty, to return thanks to God for the sacrament we have received and the sacrifice which has been offered, and to ask that the sacrifice might produce in us the effects for which it was intended, which duty we cannot well perform without additional assistance from God. The priest and people mutually wish this assistance. The importance of this prayer is clearly shown by the fact of the priest asking the people to join him in the thanksgiving, and this is done when he says: "Oremus," that is, "Let us pray." In this prayer we thank God for the unspeakable happiness of having shared in the divine sacrifice, and we ask for the grace to preserve the fruit of this holy sacrifice which was offered; this fruit is the remission of our sins, the grace of a holy life, and all that is necessary to enable us to work out our salvation and merit eternal life.

After this prayer the priest dismisses the people. Although the sacrifice of the Mass ends with the post communion, the canons of the councils forbid the people to leave the Church before they are dismissed by the priest, who says: "Ite messa est."

The Church, in dismissing the people, wishes them to understand that the ambassador by excellence, who is Jesus Christ, has been sent by us to God the Father,

before whom He bears the marks of His passion; she announces that the mystery has been accomplished, that the victim has been borne to the altar of God, that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and His Church has been accepted by the Father as an agreeable odor, and that our prayers have been carried to Heaven by the hands of the angel of High Council up to the altar on high.

The people answer: "Deo Gratias"—"Thanks be to God." This is what the Apostles did after they were blessed by Jesus Christ, before He ascended into Heaven; they went away filled with joy, praising, blessing, and thanking God.

There could not be a more fitting termination for this grandest of sacrifices and the most merciful work of God than thanksgiving. This is recommended in the Scripture, where we read, in Deuteronomy 32:3: "Celebrate the magnificence of God; his works are perfect." This short prayer, Thanks be to God, is so holy, so perfect, and so worthy of God that it is almost impossible to terminate the great sacrifice with words more mysterious or more divine. It belongs in such an especial manner to God that we cannot, without blasphemy, offer it to any creature, nor use it in any other sense than that which the Church, Sacred Scripture, and Tradition have always used it.

During the tenth century there were some few additions made to the ceremonial of the Mass, among which is the prayer which the priest recites privately,

with hands joined upon the altar and head bowed down. This prayer is of very ancient origin, and was formerly said by the priest, not at the altar, but in his private devotions. It is a sort of recapitulation of all the prayers of the Mass, and is conceived in the words: *Placeat tibi, sancta Trinitas, etc.* "O Holy Trinity, let the performance of my homage be pleasing to Thee, and grant that the sacrifice which I, unworthy, have offered up in the sight of Thy Majesty, may be acceptable to Thee, and, through Thy mercy, be propitious for me and all those for whom I have offered it."

By these words the priest prays that God would deign to accept his ministry and the acknowledgment which he makes of his dependence; that the sacrifice, which, notwithstanding his unworthiness, he offers to the divine Majesty, may be favorably received, and in mercy applied for his own salvation and the salvation of those for whom it is offered, and, lastly, that He would bless those gifts, and those to whom He gives them, knowing full well that man, if left to himself, is capable only of abusing and turning them to his destruction.

The priest, having recited the prayer, raises his eyes and his hands to Heaven and, bowing to the Cross, says: "*Benedicat vos Omnipotens Deus*"—"May the Almighty God bless you," then, turning towards the people he makes the sign of the Cross to show that the Cross of Jesus Christ is the source of

grace and everything that can contribute to our sanctification. The people answer *Amen*.

Man cannot bless except by calling on God Himself, as we learn from the Scripture, where the Lord commanded Moses to bless the people: "May the Lord bless and preserve you; may he look favorably upon you and grant you peace." (Deut. 24: 19.) The priest asks Almighty God to shower His graces and favors upon those present, as did St. Paul when he said to the Philippians: "May the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and your minds in Jesus Christ; may he supply all your wants out of the richness of his goodness." (Phil. 4: 7.)

This blessing was added to the ceremonies of the Mass about eight hundred years ago. All the prayers of the Mass are so many blessings of the people. The sacrifice of the Mass is, in itself, the principal means of conferring grace—it was instituted for that purpose. Jesus Christ offers Himself in the Mass for the sanctification of the faithful, and the priest asks for them every heavenly blessing. When he offers the host it is for all present, that they may profit by it unto life eternal. He prays that God would admit them among the elect and grant them His peace; this peace is the true source of benediction. The priest asks it again at the end of the Pater Noster. "May the peace of the Lord be always with you." Nothing is more praiseworthy than to go to church when the

blessed sacrament is exposed for adoration, and nothing is more deplorable than to find at such a time there are so few worshipers. In Masses for the dead there is no blessing, because then all solemnities are omitted, and because we have in those Masses the consolation and comfort of the dead in view we omit everything that can be of no service to them they being not present.

The priest, having given the benediction, reads the Gospel of St. John, with the same ceremonies as those observed at the first Gospel, which we have already explained. During the reading of the Gospel the priest genuflects when repeating the words "Et verbum caro factum est," "And the Word was made flesh," in order to adore the Word of God, who humbled Himself so far as to take upon Himself our humanity. At the end of the Gospel the clerk answers "Deo Gratias," so that the Mass may always end in thanksgiving.

The Gospel of St. John was the last addition made to the ceremonial of the Mass. Formerly the priest recited this Gospel in private, but, on account of the great veneration of the people for the Gospel, the Church, in response to their desires, commanded it to be read aloud at the end of every Mass.

It will not be necessary for me here to explain the words of this Gospel; and, moreover, it would be impossible for me to explain words which surpass all human understanding. In this Gospel, St. John points

out the infinite greatness, the eternity, and the divinity of the Word, by whom all things were made; after which he recounts His goodness and mercy in becoming man and dwelling among us, to enlighten our minds and to sanctify our hearts. At the end of the Gospel the people respond: "Deo gratias," that is, "Thanks be to God." And why should we not thank God for all the favors we have received? Thanks be to the Father, who gave us His only Son; thanks be to the Son, who clothed Himself with our humanity, in order to expiate our sins by His death. Thanks be to the Holy Ghost, who sanctified us in Jesus Christ; thanks to the Word made flesh, to the Lamb divine, who came to offer Himself for us, to sacrifice Himself for us, to become Himself our food and nourishment; thanks to God for all His gifts and mercies; thanks in time and eternity.

In order to preserve the fruit of the sacrifice we should frequently call to mind the sentiments we experienced during the great sacrifice, and if we are tempted to wander away, if we have the misfortune to become lukewarm or indifferent, recollect the passion and death of Jesus Christ, which was what was most intended to effect your heart and your soul. If you wish to experience the advantages of assisting at Mass, think of it frequently; remain united with Jesus Christ, not only in your prayers and good works, but still more in the occupations of your state in life; continue to offer Jesus Christ; offer yourself

with Him. Let Jesus Christ be the soul of your soul; let all your thoughts, all your actions, proceed from Him and His spirit. Let Him remain with you after Mass by the presence of His holy spirit if He be not there by His body. Offer Him incessantly to the Father, in thanksgiving for the favors He has conferred upon you for the accomplishment of your salvation, and by that means you will merit to continue the oblation and communion in the society of the saints throughout eternity.



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